

Essays in European and Oriental Literature

BY
LAFCADIO HEARN

ARRANGED AND EDITED
BY
ALBERT MORDELL



London: William Heinemann Ltd.

PREFACE

Lafcadio Hearn was employed on the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* from the beginning of 1882, till the early part of the summer of 1887. His work consisted mainly of making translations from the French, and of writing editorials, largely on literary topics. His editorials were usually at least a column long and often much longer; they appeared, as did his translations, in the Sunday issues of the *Times-Democrat*. He had a host of admirers who soon found it easy to recognize his work both by the beautiful style, the intrinsic nature of the subject or the recurrence of favorite ideas of the author. Hearn's editorials soon established his reputation as an erudite and subtle literary critic. They gave prestige to the paper as one of the best literary organs of the country.

These literary articles were more in the style of essays rather than of editorials; that is, many of them dealt with topics of universal interest rather than with questions of temporary or local importance. Indeed, a few of Hearn's unsigned contributions, "A Mad Romantic," "Zola's

Au Bonheur des Dames," "A New Romantic," and "Henri Heine's Wife," appeared as special articles in the paper because they merely exceeded the length of the average editorial.

Hearn is becoming known today as a great literary critic. His lectures on literature to his pupils in Japan which have been published from short-hand notes, and his letters, especially the *Japanese Letters* to his friend, Basil Hall Chamberlain, contain excellent literary criticism. It is also rather anomalous that the works of Hearn that are being most read are not his polished, elaborate studies, but those which he wrote hastily in the form of letters or improvised as lectures and delivered in simple language so that his students could understand him. Such has been the literary destiny that has befallen the man who rewrote his essays often a dozen times and was a follower of the Flaubert and Loti schools which sought their effects chiefly by colorful style and exquisite diction.

But the literary criticism that Hearn wrote in the nineties of the last century was not his first effort in that direction. It was merely a continuation of his work on the *New Orleans Times-Democrat* in the eighties. His later views are very much the same as those there recorded, although in his editorials there is not as much stress

laid on the moral and sociological aspect of art. His preference, however, for the French Romantics, to the Naturalistic School of writers, persisted throughout his life.

The editorials that appear in this volume were written between 1883 and 1887, that is, when Hearn was between thirty-three and thirty-seven years old. Their language is lucid and he had to forego some of his pet notions of elaborate workmanship in the matter of verbal choice in writing for a newspaper, but Hearn the artist is always present. He, however, no doubt polished these editorials for he usually had a week in which to write them.

The editorials I have chosen are those that relate to literature only. As will be seen, many of them deal with French literature. Hearn was a pioneer in translating and writing about the famous French writers who were then appearing, Zola, Maupassant, Loti, Bourget, etc. He especially worshipped Maupassant, the famous French objective short story writer, and Loti, the subjective descriptive novelist. They entranced him in spite of their great contrast to each other. He disliked Zola, for his scientific views of literature, for his naturalism, for his grossness. He recognized however the man's genius and power.

Hearn's defence of idealism and attacks upon the scientific spirit in literature, his sane views on literary beauty, and his devotion to the nobler side of art, appear in his editorials.

We have here also his earlier work on subjects for which he became better known later, namely Buddhistic literature and Japanese poetry. His work on Oriental literature before he went to Japan is as accurate in its interpretation as his subsequent work.

Though some of the literary problems Hearn discussed do not disturb us any longer, and though some of his conclusions seem now commonplace, it must be remembered that he paved the way in moulding literary opinion. His judgments have been confirmed by later critics who were even unaware that he had anticipated them. He lived before the days of Freud and Croce and yet he is not old fashioned.

The essays in this volume are a veritable literary feast. To read a splendid article like the one on Gerard de Nerval, with its beautiful poetic prose, or a piece of interpretation like the essay on Baudelaire or Flaubert, is a treat. Hearn's presentations of his views on the philosophy of literature, and his treatment of isolated authors and novels are superb.

All these essays appear in book form for the

first time. They have hitherto been unknown and inaccessible to Hearn lovers.

A word on how this volume came to be issued. Like many a lover of Hearn, I often gazed at the list of titles of the Hearn editorials given by Dr. Gould in his slanderous book on Hearn. On pages 84 to 86 of his volume he enumerates seventy-seven titles of unsigned editorials by Hearn written for the *Times-Democrat* between 1885 and 1887. He also gives a supplemental list at the end of the book. The list was made up from two of the Hearn scrap books Dr. Gould had in his possession. He reprinted three of these editorials in his book, those on "Translations," "Artistic Value of Myopia," and "Colours and Emotions." These, while not among Hearn's best editorials, whetted my appetite for more. Enviously and longingly I would gaze down the list of Hearn editorials and smack my lips over such titles as "Russian Literature Abroad," "Decadence as a Fine Art," "A Defence of Pessimism," "The Future of Idealism." I would wonder what novels were referred to in the titles "An Archæological Novel" or "A Terrible Novel." As will be seen it was chiefly the essays on literary topics that fascinated me. Why should I or any lover of Hearn or literature in general be barred from reading what Hearn

had written on these subjects? When I met Captain Mitchell McDonald, Hearn's literary executor, some half dozen years ago, I asked him whether he had Hearn's scrap books in his possession. He explained to me that Dr. Gould told him that they had been lost during the process of transferring them, with the idea of republishing the French translations in them. What a pity! I thought. I later got into communication with Dr. Gould by telephone, and he gave me the same explanation that he had given Captain McDonald.

I made up my mind to look up these editorials in the files of the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*. I had no dates to guide me except the years 1885 and 1887. So I went to the Congressional Library and spent a few days reading these editorials and noting down the dates with the idea of photostating them. Imagine, however, my pleasant surprise when I came across many other editorials on kindred topics and on the same authors as those in Gould's list. I immediately recognized Hearn's authorship.

After having read the editorials in the volumes for the years 1885 to 1887, I began to search for other editorials, which, according to his biographer, Hearn wrote for the paper between 1882

and 1884 inclusive, and which were not given in Gould's list. Like all newspaper men, Hearn preserved only some of his writings in scrap books. As I turned the volumes for those years I began discovering them. Hearn is easy to recognize. I knew that anything that related to Sanskrit literature or Buddhism was from Hearn's pen. In fact as Hearn himself records, there had been an outcry against his early editorials on Sanskrit literature, by some devout Christians who accused the paper of being infidel because of these articles. I went over the editorials and noted all those on Oriental topics and on French literature especially. The hand was unmistakably Hearn's. The clue was easy; I was guided now by reference to a pet idea like his abomination of naturalism, or his predilection for an author like Heine, or Edwin Arnold.

Again, the same biographer states that Hearn often wrote an editorial on the author he translated. I naturally assumed that an editorial on Maupassant, for example, must have been written only by Hearn, especially since he translated all the Maupassant stories for the paper. In some cases I had Hearn's own reference in his letters to an article, as in the case of "A French Romantic" (Gerard de Nerval) and "Women of

the Sword." In his letter to William D. O'Connor, March, 1884, in Mrs. Wetmore's Life, Volume I, page 317, he refers to these articles.

The editorials I chose, whose titles do not appear in Gould's book, are those of which there is not the least vestige of doubt that they are Hearn's. Where there was such an element, I excluded the editorial. No one else on the paper was as familiar with Oriental topics or had such a passion for the French romantics or possessed his matchless style. For example, three of the four articles on Loti in my volume are not listed in Gould's book. However I concluded that only Hearn, who was translating Loti for the paper, and had written the one article on him that Gould mentions, could have written also the other three. (In a letter to Krehbiel in 1886, he said that no writer ever had such an effect on him as Loti.) Again there is an editorial attacking Zola's *L'Œuvre*, given in Gould's list. I naturally concluded that the article attacking Zola's *Aux Bonheur des Dames*, which appeared in the year before Gould's list began was also Hearn's.

A word should be said in reply to those who criticize editors because they reprint works by an author that he himself never collected. All the writings of a genius contribute to understand-

ing him, even if they have little literary value. In the present case only those have been reprinted which have literary merit of a high order. Hearn wrote numerous ephemeral journalistic editorials and none of these are here. The art of selection has been strictly exercised. Moreover, it has frequently happened that some of the best works of an author have been posthumous collections. Poe is a good example.

This volume appears with the sanction of Hearn's literary executor, Captain Mitchell McDonald.

ALBERT MORDELL

Philadelphia, December 18, 1922

CONTENTS

	PAGE
ESSAYS ON LITERARY TOPICS	
The Future of Idealism	3
<i>New Orleans Times-Democrat, February 7, 1886.</i>	
Idealism and Naturalism	10
<i>May 25, 1884.</i>	
Realism and Idealism	16
<i>February 28, 1886.</i>	
A Lesson of Literary Evolution	19
<i>December 19, 1886.</i>	
Science and Literature	23
<i>August 15, 1886.</i>	
* Decadence as a Fine Art	28
<i>April 4, 1886.</i>	
Eclecticism in Periodical Literature	34
<i>March 16, 1884.</i>	
ESSAYS ON FRENCH LITERATURE	
A Mad Romantic (Gerard de Nerval)	43
<i>February 24, 1884.</i>	
The Idol of a Great Eccentric (Baudelaire)	55
<i>April 15, 1883.</i>	
The Friends of Flaubert	65
<i>February 17, 1884.</i>	
* An Archæological Novel (<i>Salamambo</i>)	74
<i>October 18, 1885.</i>	
A Great Prosateur (Maupassant)	80
<i>April 20, 1884.</i>	
* Literary Pessimism (<i>Bel Ami</i>)	87
<i>July 5, 1885.</i>	
* <i>Solitude</i> (Maupassant)	93
<i>February 14, 1886.</i>	
* A Defence of Pessimism (Maupassant)	99
<i>March 14, 1886.</i>	

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Women of the Sword (<i>Mademoiselle de Mau-</i> <i>pin</i>)	104
<i>February 3, 1884.</i>	
Zola's <i>Au Bonheur des Dames</i>	113
<i>May 13, 1883.</i>	
* <i>L'Œuvre</i> (Zola)	121
<i>June 20, 1886.</i>	
A New Romantic (Loti)	125
<i>September 23, 1883.</i>	
* The Most Original of Modern Novelists (Loti)	133
<i>December 7, 1884.</i>	
Plot-Formation in Modern Novels (Loti) . . .	141
<i>August 22, 1886.</i>	
<i>The Nation</i> on Loti	146
<i>March 13, 1887.</i>	
* The Religion of Suffering (Bourget's <i>Crime</i> <i>of Love</i>)	153
<i>February 21, 1886.</i>	
Some Curious Memoirs (Goncourt)	158
<i>May 15, 1887.</i>	
* The Fear of Death (In French Literature) .	164
<i>November 29, 1885.</i>	
A Reminiscence of Bohemia (Murger's <i>Vie de</i> <i>Boheme</i>)	170
<i>March 23, 1884.</i>	
"Lettered Misery"	176
<i>January 23, 1887.</i>	

STUDIES IN RUSSIAN, ENGLISH, GERMAN AND ITALIAN LITERATURE

* Russian Literature Abroad	183
<i>September 6, 1885.</i>	
* A Terrible Novel (<i>Crime and Punishment</i>) .	189
<i>November 22, 1885.</i>	
* Tolstoi's Vanity of Wisdom	195
<i>December 27, 1885.</i>	
The Two Arnolds	200
<i>November 4, 1883.</i>	

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Not Without Honor Save in His Own Country (Edwin Arnold)	204
<i>May 11, 1884.</i>	
Edwin Arnold's New Book (<i>The Secret of Death</i>)	211
<i>April 5, 1885.</i>	
* A Definitive Rossetti	221
<i>April 17, 1887.</i>	
* Some Human Frailty (Rossetti)	229
<i>May 23, 1886.</i>	
* Tennyson's <i>Locksley Hall</i>	236
<i>January 9, 1887.</i>	
Henri Heine's Wife	248
<i>December 9, 1883.</i>	
More Notes on Heine	260
<i>January 30, 1887.</i>	
* De Mercier on Dante	267
<i>January 10, 1886.</i>	
ORIENTAL LITERATURE	
What Buddhism Is	277
<i>January 13, 1884.</i>	
Recent Buddhist Literature	284
<i>March 1, 1885.</i>	
The Datavaya Bharata Karyalaya	292
<i>September 28, 1884.</i>	
* <i>The Song Celestial</i>	300
<i>July 26, 1885.</i>	
Indian Female Poets	309
<i>December 30, 1883.</i>	
<i>The Epic of Kings</i>	315
<i>April 22, 1883.</i>	
* Chinese Belief in God	320
<i>December 26, 1886.</i>	
A Peep at Japanese Poetry	330
<i>May 27, 1883.</i>	

The titles marked with stars are in Gould's list made up from Hearn's scrap book.

PART I
ESSAYS ON LITERARY TOPICS

ESSAYS IN EUROPEAN AND ORIENTAL LITERATURE

PART I

ESSAYS ON LITERARY TOPICS

THE FUTURE OF IDEALISM

At a time when the leaders of French fiction would almost seem to create female types chiefly with the purpose of belittling Woman, and of definitively paralyzing that exquisite and chivalrous romanticism—(an inheritance from the Norse world),—which divinized womanhood,—it is more than ever delightful to take up some *old books that are little read in our generation, or which exist only as classics for “young people,” or which have lost their popularity, simply because they belong to the literature of the imagination.* It is not an imaginative era—this latter half of the nineteenth century!—it is a period of such positivism, such concreteness of mind that true romance is declared out of fashion. What is, should alone interest the intelligent;—what is not,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

has become a theme so old fashioned as to be simply intolerable. Publishers clamor for pictures of *real* life,—fresh and warm from the incubation of some practical observer. Realism rules the market abroad, and threatens to rule it at home. Unreal life, ideal life,—anything a little too beautiful to exist, too much spiritualized to be tangible,—too exquisite to be believed in,—too pure for unrefined appreciation, belongs merely to the realm of nonsense, and can obtain no serious consideration. The age has become so serious that it cannot endure the triviality of imagination; it has become so practical that it has also become gross; it has become so skeptical that it characterizes as idolatrous, or even as fetichistic, all inclination to sacrifice at the shrine of the Impossible. Yet it is decidedly strange that this intellectual condition should be coincident with the general acceptance of evolutionary philosophy. According to that philosophy the influence of idealism must have a marked effect upon the future of mankind,—for partly the same reason that the women of certain old Greek cities are said to have brought forth children beautiful as those marble figures which they had the privilege of daily beholding,—or that the daughters of certain Arabian tribes, in whose tents pet gazelles were always kept, are said to have become famous

THE FUTURE OF IDEALISM

for the beauty of their large black eyes. . . . Probably this era is only a brief period of esthetic barrenness; the soil of imagination has been so thoroughly tilled and planted that it is well it should lie fallow for awhile. A new idealism must arise, as surely as there is a law of progress; and the very tendencies of the time point to a coming change for the better. Never was the necessity for an ideal so powerfully shown, as it has been by the sterile fiction of the last ten years abroad. The present literary situation would appear partly due to a short-lived triumph of the more sensual Latin spirit,—antipodal to that of those Northern races in whose tongues even the name of the splendid sun was feminine, and that of the pale moon, masculine.

Northern thought, indeed,—the imagination of those fair-haired races, Scandinavian, or Teutonic, from which the English-speaking races of to-day claim descent,—has produced the best of those wonderful types of idealism which cannot die. The tendency of the Southern races has been in the opposite extreme; and the Provencal troubadours sang of the same indecent class of amours which seem inseparable from the modern French novel. The fancy that etherealized woman, that created all those Fairy Princesses, Undines and Swan-maidens of romance,—was

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

the fancy of a strange race. To the Latins, of even the most cultivated modern period, the power to shape imaginary types, at once charming and impossible, seems to be foreign. With all his fantastic power, Baudelaire could not evoke^d a womanly figure worthy to vie with the creations of Hawthorne, or even with the vapory creatures of Poe's dreams. Perhaps the only modern French writer who has done better than Baudelaire in this regard was Theophile Gautier,—most of whose ideal women, however, are only ghosts,—such as Hermonthis and Clarimonde, Arria and the Marquise. But when he attempted to create rather than to resurrect,—to form a new fancy rather than to give fresh form to an ancient one,—his French weakness manifested itself in such a romance as *Spirite*. No French mind could call into being a *Rapaccini's daughter*, nor an *Elsie Venner*. There is a materialism in the race which renders even the sensations of horror or fear difficult to express without some tangible and visible cause;—there is no mysticism in its temperament. Without any mysticism,—(however esthetic the national fancy may be)—it is definitely confined,—condemned^d to develop behind boundaries where it may attain the utmost perfection of such art as may

THE FUTURE OF IDEALISM

be cultivated within those boundaries, but nothing more.

The idealism of the English and German races would appear to have lost, for the time being, all power of further expansion,—to have exhausted itself. On the other hand, a new idealism is making its appearance from another direction—also Northern, however,—from Russia! Tourgueneff gave evidences of astonishing capabilities in this direction; but he rarely utilized his gift. His brief and powerful fantasies, however, seem to have sown the seed for a new crop of strange romances, which promise to astonish the reading world,—phantom-flowers far more interesting than that class of imaginative work compared by Gautier to a growth of black roses. In this kind of fiction there is a marked inclination to utilize scientific knowledge; and the result is curious in the extreme. Some of the stories, based upon recently discovered facts in psychology, produce a very queer effect upon the reader,—like a memory so subleized by lapse of time that one is not quite sure whether it be the recollection of a dream or a fact. In one of the most recently published stories of this sort the heroine is an *electric woman*; and the rare phenomenon of human electricity is treated after

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

a most ingenious manner. There is certainly one questionable theory in the narration,—the idea that the mysterious power which is possessed by the beautiful but unhappy creature, and which finally causes her destruction, moral and physical, through no fault of her own,—is developed only under peculiar circumstances and in the presence of a certain man. But the very questionableness of the fancy, from a scientific point of view, is made to form the mysterious charm of the narrative—a narrative so remarkable in its intensity that the impression of it can never be forgotten.

The present indications are that a new school of idealism and of poetry may be formed by Russian influence, and be fully worthy of the great age to which it will be given. It is already commencing to have weight in France, which brought realism of the audacious sort to such absolute perfection as to influence the whole reading world. By the confession of a distinguished German professor, that French novel has fairly killed modern German fiction. Germany is flooded with French novels, and with translations of French novels, while German fiction is becoming obsolete! The same French school has considerably effected English and American romance;—the tendency to realism is

THE FUTURE OF IDEALISM

still on the increase; while idealism would seem to be so much on the wane that its loftiest expression, Poetry, is declining. Not in the person of a Tennyson, indeed; but in the great majority of recent poetry. In France poetry seems to have died with Victor Hugo;—the *Parnassiens*, like Swinburne in England, now sacrifice everything to form; and the soul, the life of the art, is rapidly evaporating. The most extraordinary thing about Russian literary art is, that while it promises to renovate idealism, it has also given the world some of the strongest realistic work ever done, without descending into impropriety.

IDEALISM AND NATURALISM

The new work of Zola—*La Joie de Vivre*—is most astonishing in the fact that it even exceeds *Pot-Bouille* in “systematized bestiality,” as a foreign critic has observed. While *Les Rougons-Macquart* series is as yet far from being completed, this new volume nevertheless seems to form the keystone of Zola’s naturalistic arch, and convinces any intelligent person that it is idiocy to talk about the injustice of criticizing the “Master’s” work before that work is completed! There are already more than enough samples of the Zolaite system to enable the whole world to understand its character. It is not especially of *La Joie de Vivre*, therefore, but of what Zola calls Naturalism that we propose to speak.

Three years ago, in a remarkable series of literary articles contributed to the *Figaro*, Zola boldly predicted that naturalism,—as he understood it,—was to be the literature of the future. Classical literature was bloodless, factitious;—Romanticism was anemic, phantasmal, illusive,—a creation of moonshine and dreams. Idealism in literature was pernicious to morality and

IDEALISM AND NATURALISM

detrimental to the happiness of mankind. What folks called the art of imagination was mere jugglery,—a species of sinister magic by which life was presented in false colors, and love portrayed in supernatural aspects. Utterly devoid himself of imagination, and therefore totally unable to appreciate the importance of the imaginative faculty in the development of national character and in the creation of the ethical sentiment,—Zola defiantly stated his firm belief in his own mission as a reformer of the human race. The duty of naturalism was to destroy idealism—to paint life as it is,—to depict precisely what idealism seeks to conceal.

Well, the great literary “reformer” has more than half completed the enormous series of novels which were to revolutionize belles-lettres. The result has only been to revolutionize public opinion, both in regard to naturalism and to its prophet. Zola’s own disciples abandoned him at a certain point of his journey. Even Maupassant retired with nausea from the vitiated atmosphere of hospitals and dissecting-rooms; he carried his hatred of prudery and of restraint to singular extremes, but not to the extremes of *Pot-Bouille*, or pages 403–12 of *La Joie de Vivre*. The horrible volumes of Zola might indeed sell, but they did not the less disgust. The French

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

public do not always stick at artistic indelicacies; but the raw and bloody pessimism of Zola's innovations was totally foreign to French character. The gloomy brutality of the foreigner could not fail at last to provoke a reaction against him among a people so essentially joyous and graceful. What Zola had styled naturalism was found indeed to be only his own miserable pessimism; and no delusion of romance was ever greater than the self-delusion of this man who imagined himself a recounter of sober facts and solid truth. He has, however, done something new in teaching the world the opinion of humanity entertained by a person apparently incapable of feeling a really noble impulse, of discerning a beautiful trait, or of perceiving in his fellow-creatures that something which elevates mankind above the lowest animals. Physiological curiosities these books may be,—but only in the same sense that a man, who cannot utter a sentence without uttering an obscene phrase, or deliver an opinion uncolored by brutal cynicism, is a physiological curiosity.

Happily the fashion he set by studying humanity in hospitals and in the amphitheatres of medical schools, is being abandoned; and one can only wonder that its wicked falsity was not recognized before. The mysteries of death, not

IDEALISM AND NATURALISM

of life, are to be sought in charnel-houses. The scenes of *Pot-Bouille* and *La Joie de Vivre* are incidents that, in real life, occur only behind the darkest and thickest of screens. There are subjects which the most learned and experienced physicians never speak of but in the technical and modest language of science,—incomprehensible to vulgar ears; and even if man is only, as M. Zola would have it, an animal, a more thorough knowledge of natural history might have taught him that the lower animals have a sense of modesty. In the attempt to popularize the results of investigations made even by science with painful reluctance, and only through that solemn sense of duty which gives to the character of the true physician the dignity of a hierophant—there is something traitorously base,—as of a betrayal of secrets communicated under triple pledges. Cruelly unjust it may sometimes be to estimate a man by his own work; yet in the case of the author of *La Joie de Vivre* one feels that no injustice has been done by that severe French critic who declares the book to be a reflection of the man. One who holds all men base, all women contemptible,—who never smiles, who never praises, who never admires, who never loves—must indeed be a mentally diseased character himself,—as uninviting a sub-

· ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

ject for physiological study as any of those frightful characters whose portraits he has tried to draw. Strictly speaking, he has not written novels, he has only created a pseudo-literary museum. Such books as these do not propagate their species;—they remind one of that family of monsters never to be seen outside the glass walls of vials filled with spirits of wine. . . .

No!—imagination is not dead, idealism is not moribund. Imagination, as Napoleon said, still rules the world. Man will always need an ideal to help him to self-elevation as surely as he will always need a divinity;—the unreal, the impossible, the unattainable, are indispensable to humanity. *Il n'y a de tentant que l'impossible.* In order to become better, nobler, wiser than we are, we must have a visible goal to strive for, an apparent model to copy, a beautiful incentive to urge to loftier exertion; and only he who is incapable of seeing beyond the wretched boundaries of the baser senses, will ever seek consolation by striving to persuade his fellow-beings that they are as worms upon a dung-hill. It is the unreality of art that makes its charm, the impossibility of the statue that lends it value, the inexplicability of beauty that creates the fascination; but for unknown thousands of years the Ideal has guided mankind along the path to

IDEALISM AND NATURALISM

progress like a pillar of fire. As Greek mothers, charmed by the beauty of statues, brought forth children almost as comely as the statues themselves,—as the Bedouin wife gazes into the eyes of the gazelle, that the eyes of her future child may be large and lustrous as those of the desert pet, so also do nations by the study of the unreal develop reality into greatness. So long as humanity endures, Idealism shall guide men to higher things;—and the Impossible will continue to dominate the intellectual aspirations of mankind, even as in the old mythology of Egypt, Neit hoops her luminous woman's-body athwart the curving sky, from the rising unto the setting-place of the sun,—from Orient to Occident.

REALISM AND IDEALISM

We have frequently drawn attention to the^o increasing tendency toward a revolting realism which is manifested by the leading authors of France. Indeed, the methods of the dissecting-room are growing in favor with the *litterateurs* of the world. French authors have been the chief sinners in this regard, because they have to cater to a peculiar public taste, and because the French language is peculiarly adapted to embalming with exquisite literary art the most awful forms of human depravity. No English writer dares to treat the topics which give life and color to the masterpieces of Emile Zola, Alphonse Daudet and Guy de Maupassant. With us, this realism takes the form of a most exhaustive and exhausting analysis, which extends to the most inane and commonplace people. First, these people tell you what they think, then the author proceeds to tell you why they think so, and then somebody else expatiates on what they might have thought in different circumstances. This is, in the main, the method of James and Howells. It lacks the coarseness of vice which belongs to the French school, but it also lacks the

REALISM AND IDEALISM

deep interest which the works of the French masters possess for the student of morbid anatomy.

What our age really needs is not more realism, but more of that pure idealism which is founded on a perfect knowledge of the essential facts of human life. There is so much misery visible on every hand that the youngest of us stands in but slight danger of taking too roseate a view of the new world. The most imminent danger to every man and woman lies in the loss of the idealism which is the basis of the loftiest relations and the holiest duties of our lot. To believe that all men and women are, in reality, morally rotten is but preliminary to floating with the tide. When once a man comes to believe in the general depravity of his fellow men, he is far beyond the saving power of such maxims as "Honesty is the Best Policy," and the like. Realism should be the means, not the absolute end, of the writer of fiction.

In truth this debauching realism tends to make fiction miss its highest purpose—the recreation of minds that are weary of the toil and strife of the world. The average man sees enough of human depravity; he knows too many absolutely commonplace people; he is too often at the mercy of bores; therefore, when he turns to fiction for

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

rest, he wants and expects something different from the routine of his daily life. Fiction has perhaps become more scientific than it was in the hands of Thackeray and Dickens, but it has lost the restfulness and the brawny, moral tone which it then possessed. This is a real loss, for the novel reader wants neither a medical treatise nor an essay on political and social economy. So long as the world endures there will be no lack of heartrending realism; so long as human nature remains unchanged there will be an unappeasable yearning for the idealism without which men have neither the courage to struggle nor the power to enjoy.

A LESSON OF LITERARY EVOLUTION

It is singular that the civilization which officially pays the highest tribute to books calculated to produce a good moral effect, should also be just that civilization which has produced the greatest amount of literature calculated to effect a totally opposite result. The French Academy this year crowned twelve moral books; and Paris produced during the last twelve months at least twelve times twelve of the vilest volumes to print. The last work of Zola did not sink quite down to the infamy of *Pot-Bouille* or others of his previous novels; but Zolaism has been thrown forward into a sort of tolerable relief this year by a creation so infernally black that anything ever imagined by the prince of Naturalism appears luminous in contrast with it,—the abominable *Zohar* of Catulle Mendes. And Mendes himself, it seems, has not been able to reach the bottom of the pit: it was reserved for the author of *Hemo* to find an abyss below the abyss. Perhaps *Hemo* touches the very extreme: at all events, we imagine that civilized ethics *must*

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

place a legal net at this point, to prevent any falling below it. *Hemo's* place belongs to the realm of obscene nightmare.

It was predicted at the first apparition of naturalism, that it would produce a species of literary epidemic,—communicate contagion to healthy English literature. Such, however, has not been the case. Legislation as well as sound public opinion exercised such rigid quarantine, that the malady failed to show itself,—except in the guise of a few emasculated translations. Spain suffers a little, and Italy a little, from the introduction of some Naturalistic germs; but they have not found favorable soil to propagate in elsewhere. To English readers, however, the spectacle of literary evolution in a country where tastes have become morbid, and censorship almost impotent, has a very considerable philosophical interest. First we see a literature become stagnant, then foul and turbid;—finally we may expect to see it clear itself, as water is purified by nature's chemistry. The unhealthy elements will either become innocuous, or be steadily precipitated, and remain in harmless quiescence at the slimy bottom. They are even now commencing to travel thither by their own weight; and the day must come when there will be no further visible signs of their former

LITERARY EVOLUTION

existence than an occasional bubble rising to the surface.

In France the struggle between radicalism and conservatism in literature has been very rapid, and consequently so violent as to be easily studied and understood. But it must be remembered that even in English-speaking countries where the ethical temperament is somewhat different, the very same antagonistic elements are at work, and engaged in a slower contest. Conservatism still triumphs; and its weight in American literature is so great, that only the most extraordinary growths of the sort opposed to it, have any chance of bursting their way up to the light. Accordingly there has been, and still is, a great deal of complaint about "schools," and about dry canons, and formal standards; and doubtless there may be some truth in the least extravagant of such complaints. It is, in fact, a hopeful sign there should be dissatisfaction among the host of literary aspirants, since dissatisfaction is in itself a spur to effort and a stimulant of progress. But while we have before us the singular spectacle of the results ensuing upon the complete overthrow of conservatism in French literature, we have certainly much cause to be thankful that literary conservatism still rules in England and the United States,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

and that the English language of the future appears to have a fair chance of reaching its grandest written expression without having to suffer the evil consequences of a wild revolt against the severity of pure taste and pure morals.

SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

It is now more than half a century since Macaulay published his famous essay on Milton, in which he enunciated and most powerfully maintained the theory that "as civilization advances, poetry almosts necessarily declines." The great essayist believed this theory to be likewise true of music, of painting, and of sculpture. He contended that, while the experimental sciences gain continually, the imagination is more and more fettered by the complex interests of a highly developed society. Although his thesis may be open to successful attack—as regards music, sculpture and painting—it is yet almost beyond question with respect to poetry, and the other branches of literature, in which the imagination is the dominating force. During the fifty years which have elapsed since Macaulay wrote, the advance in all departments of science has been tremendous. The face of society has been changed by a multiplicity of inventions, the ultimate significance of which we cannot even yet comprehend. There has been much masterly investigation of the fundamental principles of government, a great increase in the knowledge of

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

true political economy, a vast improvement in the condition of the toiling millions, an unparalleled extension of the domain of human freedom. In the fields of the imagination, however, no corresponding conquests have been made. Poets there have been and are—some of them with the stamp of genius—but none of them possessing the supreme power of creating the ideals and expressing the underlying emotions of the race. There have been and are dramatists also of a very high order—gifted with the skill to portray the idiosyncrasies of human character and to crystallize the evanescent fancies of the day—but none of the masters who create the personalities whose attributes transcend the boundaries of race and time.

The prevailing fault of contemporaneous literature is a self-consciousness that is fatal to the graces of the imagination. Our habits of thought are subjective; the great works of the imagination are objective in their nature. The Greek of the olden time looked upon the glories of nature with an eye quick to take in every shade of perfect color and every curve of transcendent beauty; he contemplated the deeds of the mighty heroes of the past, without stopping to speculate on the precise cause of the thrill he felt; he wrote poetry, because there was in his

SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

heart a depth of feeling which scorned the mockery of prose. In after-times, indeed, the Greek mind came to occupy itself chiefly with the subtleties of metaphysics. Even the form of freedom had perished. From that time forth, no great work of imagination was produced. There were rhetoricians and poetasters innumerable, orators and poets there were none. Homer had written the greatest of epics long before there existed a scientific grammar of the language he used. In later ages all the refinements of that wonderful tongue were known, but there lived no Greek who could infuse into the cold forms of language the perfect sublimity that breathes through the words of Priam's prayer.

Of the more pretentious poetry of our own period, it may be said that it has, in the main, an over-scientific cast. A great deal of the verse written nowadays must be studied to be understood. Now this is never true of the very highest order of poetry, because perfect poetry is concerned with the perfect expression of human sentiment. Even the humblest man can catch the dithyrambic roll of the immortal lines which Burns has given to Robert Bruce. Tennyson rises to his greatest heights when he throws off the scientific influences of the century and permits himself to be a poet pure and simple. It is then

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

that he gives us priceless gems like the intercalary songs in *The Princess*—verses like these:

“Thy voice is heard thro’ rolling drums
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands;
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee;
The next like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.”

The novel is the literary form which the nineteenth century may truly claim to have perfected. Yet at the present time, even the novel seems to be suffering from the over-scientific spirit. In the struggle after perfection of style, more essential attributes are lost. Our leading novelists seem to forget that the overshadowing purpose of a novel should be the unfolding of the plot, and that the novel was never intended to expound schemes of philosophy and wire-drawn theories concerning the organic structure of the social fabric. Every perfect novel teaches many a moral, as does human life, of which the novel is but the mirror. There are few things more tedious than what the Germans call the *Tendenz-Novelle*. It is better that philosophy and fiction should dwell apart.

SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

In all the provinces of imaginative literature we stand in dire need of the buoyant naturalness which is characteristic of earlier writers. The longing for this quality is not to be satisfied by the anatomical accuracy and over-wrought attention to detail which chiefly marks the most applauded efforts of contemporary genius.

DECADENCE AS A FINE ART

In the enormous and putrid mass of realistic rhyme and fiction which has been created by the pessimistic philosophy and morbid feeling of certain French writers,—one occasionally detects a brilliant sparkle, a many colored scintillation, as of a jewel in a dung-hill. Careful search, made with the assistance of a strong stomach and a large stock of patience, might reveal a considerable number of such flashing fragments of thought, which merit, after proper purification, a setting apart. But the task is so repulsive that were it not for Parisian investigators, the very existence, not to say the value, of these much-befouled curiosities would remain almost unknown. They are buried in piles of decaying fiction, in slime of decomposing poetry, in material which would require the heroism of a literary Orfilia to examine. But found they have been; and some of the most charming essays and novelettes contributed to Parisian periodicals have enabled us to know what they signify. Three or four installments of such work in the *Revue Litteraire* are especially devoted to their analysis. It appears

DECADENCE AS AN ART

that out of all the rotten rubbish of sensational naturalism and pessimism, something false but singularly exquisite has been evolved by the mental ferment of the time;—a theory has been crystallized,—an art-idea has been formed. It does not really matter that the same theories should be accepted by minds ever crawling and dwelling in nastiness, and by minds which soar so nearly to the sublime as to occasionally scorch their wings;—we may hope if not believe, that the former are only the larvæ, the latter the perfect creatures. We cannot think that all the grubs will enjoy such metamorphosis; but if some do, we may dare to believe that the long mental decomposition of imaginative literature has not been utterly without a beneficial tendency.

The thin school of writers alluded to, seem to call themselves *decadents*, in dismal recognition of the intellectual era to which they belong; and they affect to worship only the crumbling, the effete, the ruined, the medieval, the Byzantine. So far, however, has this worship been carried that it finally brought about for them the evolution of a new form of that very thing from which they professed to be running away,—the Ideal. And this new Ideal, although apparently writhing in pain, and quite likely to die amid its worshippers, is so much

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

better than no Ideal at all, that it promises to have some creditable effect upon the art of expression.

And yet it is so spectral an idol that to give a well-defined conception of it were almost impossible. Perhaps, indeed, it has no generally recognized definition yet;—it may be only materializing into shape! Its cult can best be studied through its effects upon Richepin and other poets of eccentric but indubitable talent. It is followed chiefly, however, by men of much less weight—petty *dilettanti*, whose names are never echoed across the ocean, but who have their special clubs, organs, and publishers in Paris. Their confessed ambition is to carry the art of language to the supreme limit of expressive power,—to convey the most complete idea of an object with the utterance of an onomatopoeia,—to paint a picture in a single line of text,—to make one quatrain frame in the whole beauty of a landscape, with color, form, shifting of light and shadow. In other words these realists have in their worship of *decadence* far exceeded the wildest dreams of Romanticism;—for it is not now the Ideal alone that they pursue, but the Absolutely Impossible, as we shall presently see.

According to M. Leon Barracand, and to M. Georges de Peyrrebrune,—both contributors to

DECADENCE AS AN ART

the *Revue Littéraire*, and both keen satirists of the "new movement," the pursuers of this novel Impossible hold that the quintessence of the art of modern poetry consists in compressing into a single sonnet *all impressions of form, of color, of music, of perfume*,—so that souls enamored of the beautiful shall swoon with delight upon hearing it. *All impressions, remember!* The new art is especially an art of condensation, of concentration;—one sentence of the Future Language is to represent an ordinary volume; the Universe is to be reflected in one page of a future book,—just as the pendant raindrop, however small, can reflect the great sky. But it is better to quote the words which M. Peyrrebrune puts into the mouth of one of these ecstasies. Listen:—

— . . . "Yes,—by concentration above all! The last supreme word of the Poet's art will be uttered by him who shall have discovered the formula for expressing in one solitary verse, *all forms, all beauties, all sensations!* One single verse,—yes, perhaps, one single word,—like that of GOD, which in itself contains Infinity and Eternity. . . . Then, as it will require but a second, the time of an electric flash, to see, in the blaze of that one Word, all the visible and the comprehensible of the Artistic Unreal—to discern, beyond Space and Time, the lightning spectacle of all that has been, that is,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

that will ever be,—then, the human soul, all suddenly satisfied and emptied of desire, having attained the summit of felicity (since it will have at once tasted all delights, have realized all the frenzied longings of its nature)—the human soul will pass away into the Infinite Nothingness, as an extinguished sun vanishes into the depths of the Immeasurable Cosmos.” . . .

The extravagance of supposing that all human ideas, sensations, desires, can be eventually compressed into one word, the utterance of which shall suffice to annihilate man, or at last to blend him forever with the Unknowable, may certainly be ridiculed as a tenet in this serious nineteenth century; but there is poetry in the fancy, as well as a pseudo-philosophy immemorially old. For thousands of years,—perhaps for thousands of ages,—men have been seeking after this ideal of expression, just as they have pursued the delusions of alchemy, believed in the lies of astrology, hunted for the jewel in the toad's head, and the dragon-stone, and the self-luminous carbuncle. Various faiths aided the search; the Brahmins claimed to know the mystic Word, whose utterance elevated men to heaven;—the Buddhists held that the syllable OM gave power to enter Nirvana to those who knew its deeper signification;—in the Kabbala we read of the Name

DECADENCE AS AN ART

by the combinations of whose letters men may be created from dust;—in the Talmud we are told of the Ineffable Appellation of forty-two letters, revealed only to those beloved of the Lord;—nor is it necessary to cite the magical attributes which Islamic fancy lends to the name of Allah, engraved upon emeralds, or upon seals, or written upon the million charms sold by the marabouts of the Maghreb. . . . Thus it would seem that the extremes touched by pessimism have given out a force of repulsion which is hurling minds back even beyond the point started from,—beyond all conceivable idealism,—beyond all rational imagination,—beyond the limits of the world itself into the mysteries of Time and Space and Infinitude! All of which, is, to say the least, sublimely amusing!

ECLECTICISM IN PERIODICAL LITERATURE

There are certainly many recognized authorities on *belles-lettres*, who deny real excellence to any literary method save that of which they are either professors or apostles, and frown with academical austerity upon all literary aspirants who depart from the severe canons of classic English. And, nevertheless, illustrious as are these dogmatists, it must be acknowledged that their number is slowly but surely decreasing, and that the more rigid forms of style are being gradually abandoned. The annually increasing scope of knowledge, the birth of new sciences which form new vocabularies and develop new ideas, the fresh impulses given to esthetics, the growing influence of those Oriental literatures but lately made accessible to European and American students, the recent wonderful progress in linguistics,—all these have modified and enriched the English of the so-called Victorian period.

Furthermore, the magnetism of the modern Latin writers has affected recent English literature to no small extent. It is true that the

ECLECTICISM IN LITERATURE

changes are much more observable in poetry than in prose; but the latter will as certainly be elaborated as the former has been. As yet, English prose writers cannot be definitely classed into schools; and one can only infer from the evolutionary history of foreign literature the probable characteristics of the future hierarchies of our own.

In France, for example, several remarkable schools of prose have developed themselves—each of which seems peculiarly adapted to a special purpose, and some of which have produced extraordinary effects. We have no *physiological* novelists, for example; while the French possess quite a number;—nor does English literature boast any passional writers to be compared with the higher class of French neo-romantics. There is not much reason to regret the non-existence of English Naturalistic novelists; but there are certain admirable qualities about the naturalistic method,—a method meriting attention because of its special adaptability to the treatment of other subjects and vicious ones. On the other hand we have in John Addington Symonds and a few rare scholars, examples of that sympathetic, brilliant, exquisitely-figurative style, which rivals the richest productions of French literary art, and perhaps introduces one superb

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

phrase of the highly floriated English literature that is to be.

The older and severer styles of French and English prose had this advantage: they were equally well adapted to the treatment of any subject or class of subjects. But the ideas of our own time could not be adequately expressed with the language of the last century; and the immensely increased range and capacities of the English of to-day must result in the formation of various distinct schools of writers. (We refer naturally to popular not to technical writers, who, with their special vocabularies, must ultimately become wholly unintelligible to unscientific readers.) The new styles will be adapted rather to special than to general ends; and the imagination may anticipate an epoch when it shall have become the literary law to treat different popular topics after different methods;—there might be historical, artistic, romantic systems of writing, regulated by codes which no respectable author would presume to infringe. Under such a system the writer would perhaps be compelled to select a special class of subjects according to the particular quality of his talent. Certain very important distinctions among the best French authors have already been laid down by an eminent literary analyst. He divides the most for-

ECLECTICISM IN LITERATURE

cible writers of French prose into two large classes: *Myopes* and *Presbyopes*;—the former, of whom Gautier was an illustrious example describing with mosaic delicacy, with microscopic amplification of detail,—just as a near-sighted person beholds an object; the latter, exemplified in the person of Prosper Mérimée, describing with great force and definiteness whole scenes rather than details,—as a far-sighted man beholds them. Obviously the Myopic style is unsuited to history, tragedy, or epic poetry, although admirably adapted to those special branches of prose and poetry in which Gautier excelled.

These remarks, however, have been uttered only as a fitting introduction to what seems to us a new idea,—the idea of a really *eclectic* periodical. No such periodical exists to-day—not even in Paris where almost every literary fancy possible to the cultivated mind has found expression, and almost every literary theory has been practically tested. Perhaps the nearest approach to it is the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, to which so many writers of opposite schools have contributed their best work; but this review and its new rivals alike reflect the personality of the management. The best English and American magazines have never approached eclecticism;—

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

each one is marked by a *general* individuality. When we find great diversities of style admitted, diversity of opinion does not exist; and where the policy in regard to personal ideas is most latitudinarian, liberty of style is least admissible. An absolutely perfect magazine—an eclectic periodical *par excellence*,—should, it seems to us, allow the largest liberty to opinion and the greatest possible range to diversity of style,—at the same time encouraging certain forms of treatment of certain special subjects. Such a literary medium ought to be conducted by a committee of men loving art for art's sake, and fully conscious of the fact that beauty is not necessarily confined to any one style of expression or any particular school of *belles-lettres*. There is exquisite loveliness in a Greek vase, but there is wondrous beauty also in Chinese porcelain-work;—there is rare grace in French bronzes, but also in Japanese;—and there is probably more real art in Indian ivory-carving and goldsmith work than in the latest European fashions of jewelry. So also those various modes in which the jewelers and enamellers of thought-utterance make their designs, are each and all worthy of study and of admiration: literature has its artists in mosaic, and its sculptors of colossi,—its iron-moulders and workers in terra-cotta, its Venetian glass-

ECLECTICISM IN LITERATURE

blowers and granite-carvers. . . . Might we not compare the old-fashioned manner of making a literary bouquet to the plan of selecting only blossoms of the faintest tints and perfumes? Is there no romance, no charm, in sable roses, in crimson lilies,—in flowers of furious and fantastic color,—in those beautiful floral monsters whose tints fascinate the eye and whose odors bewilder the brain? Surely the time is not far distant when the new, the strange, the exotic, the amorphous, the *bizarre*, shall find place in the conservatories of our literary florists,—and savage flowers shall be interwoven with the wreaths and garlands of the Muses.

PART II
ESSAYS ON FRENCH LITERATURE

A MAD ROMANTIC

The curious legend regarding the supernatural ancestry of the Queen of Sheba, elsewhere printed, may recall to lovers of the French romantic school; and at the time when the history of that the history of perhaps the most remarkable of Oriental romances ever written by a European, —*Histoire de Balkis et Salomon*, which may be found in that portion of Gerard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient*, bearing the alluring title *Les Nuits du Ramazan*. This writer was certainly the most singular personage of the Romantic schools some extraordinary facts connected with grand galaxy of writers is being compiled, and given to the world in a series of valuable memoirs, some few remarks about De Nerval will certainly interest those who have thus far pleasantly perused our notes upon distinguished French novelists and poets.

“Gerard de Nerval” was only a nom-de-plume, although it was destined to become ineffaceably graven among the names of the Romantic movement:—Gerard's real name was Labrunine. Nor was “De Nerval” his only pseudonym; for in the early part of his career he successively

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

adopted and abandoned as many different noms-de-plume as he wrote articles; but he finally became so celebrated as De Nerval that his real name was forgotten save by a few intimate friends. The history of his earliest literary ventures, which have not been preserved, is partly narrated in the pages of Gautier's *Histoire du Romantisme*; but for present purposes it will only be necessary to mention those of his writings by which he is best known, and which are destined to endure by reason of their eccentricity of conception and elfish beauty of style. The impression produced by his works is totally different from that created by the perusal of other Romantic authors;—yet this intrinsic peculiarity is not easily analyzed. It is not wholly due to the spiritual delicacy of his writing, nor altogether to the character of the subjects which inspired him; although partly traceable to both causes. Like Edgar Poe he possessed the very remarkable power of expressing in words the feelings and fancies of dreams; but, unlike Poe, he gave to such expression a sense of gentle happiness or of drowsy melancholy which communicates itself to the reader. There is a sleepy beauty in his thought, an unconscious charm in his style, that lulls the fancy like an opiate. But there is also something more,—something not of

A MAD ROMANTIC

the living world. He who reads Poe's *Ligeia*, *Eleanora*, the *House of Usher*, or *Monos and Daimonos* for the first time knows that he is reading of spectres, of nightmares—(the phantoms of a disordered brain, if we are to accept the well-grounded theory of Francis Gerry Fairfield). But the Women of De Nerval deceive and charm,—disguising their true character like those spirits of folklore-tale who only reveal their kinship to the invisible world when menaced by mortal love or hate. One must spy their every action and gesture more closely than did the Count of Lusignan watch Melusine, to discover a hint of their unearthly origin. They are very loveable, very real in aspect, yet by close observation we find they are bodiless as the women of dreams;—they cast no sharp shadows;—they are beings of mist, daughters of air or fire, as De Nerval himself styles them in *Les Filles du Feu*. It is not easy, indeed, to discover their ghostliness unless we are placed upon our guard. Madmen have painted wonderful pictures of which the madness is not at first perceptible save to a master-eye. Gerard was such a painter among the word-artists. He was insane! It is even doubtful whether he ever had any prolonged "lucid intervals." All that he wrote—(except, perhaps, his translation of *Faust*, which

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Goethe pronounced the best of its kind)—was more or less affected by his mental affection. It has been said that the wakeful state of the mildly insane may be compared to the state of dreaming in normal minds. This is the secret of the impression made by De Nerval's pages, which have the strange interest and the semi-diaphanous unreality of dreams. Another peculiarity of his books is a certain incoherency, at once provoking and charming—the incoherency of high cerebral exaltation. He interrupts the most fascinating of recitals with curious interludes, with astonishing digressions at brief intervals. Imagine the most accomplished of scholars and *raconteurs* flushed with wine!—he is telling a delightful story, and from time to time breaks the narrative with digressions of a character totally foreign to it. This feature is discernible in most of Gerard's stories, with two notable exceptions; and in the creation of those he was assisted by some writers of uncommon talent. One is *La Main Enchantée*; the other the *Histoire de Balkis*.

It is seldom indeed that an insane man is capable of producing literary work of the very best quality; and Gerard de Nerval must be considered one of the most extraordinary instances of this ability ever known. He was doubtless insane

A MAD ROMANTIC*

when he translated the first and second parts of Goethe's *Faust*, whose immortal author exclaimed on reading De Nerval's version: "Never before was I so well comprehended!" He was certainly insane when he wrote *La Bohème Galante*—an exquisite medley of folklore, antiquarianism, and fantastic narration. This volume contains among other things some very dainty chapters upon the French ballads of the sixteenth century, and two marvelous stories,—*Le Monstre Vert* and *La Main Enchantée*. The first is curiously brief; but no one who reads it will forget the soldier's experience at the Dance of the Wines in the haunted cellar, when the chosen bottle falls and breaks, to change into the nude body of a blonde woman lying in a pool of blood. The other tale, of considerable length, is superior perhaps to anything Hoffmann wrote; it is a masterpiece of mediævalism. How weirdly vivid is the scene of the execution, when, after the bewitched Hand has been severed from the felon's body, it runs, like a crab through the narrow streets, and like a spider up the walls of a certain quaint building even to the window at which the wizard stands awaiting it! An equally odd medley is *Les Filles de Feu*. The names of fair women which form its division-titles would seem to

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

promise a collection of character-studies, and a general uniformity of purpose. The reader will find himself deceived, but not disappointed; for this intermingling of philosophical treatises, romances, and dramas is so pleasingly original that its incongruity is readily forgotten. *Les Filles de Feu* contains the prettiest thing De Nerval wrote,—*Sylvie*,—the sweetest imaginable episode of modern country-life,—a delicate idyl which Theophile Gautier ranked with *Paul and Virginia*. It also contains a totally unique creation, *Angelique*,—supposed to be the history and results of an antiquarian research among curious MSS. of the sixteenth century;—the touching story of a knight's daughter who fled from her home with a common varlet, and well paid the penalty incident to such amorous follies.

* *

*

Gerard's mild insanity occasionally aggravated into violence, exciting the alarm of his friends; and it was once found necessary to confine him in an asylum. He utilized the experience in a singular manner, being one of those madmen *who know that they are mad*. *Aurelie; ou, La Rêve et La Vie* is a romance in which the phenomena of insanity are scientifically treated by a madman! Something of the same morbid

A MAD ROMANTIC

tendency to study mental hallucinations may also be found in Gerard's Oriental story, *L'histoire du Calife Hakem*, in the second volume of his *Voyage en Orient*. By those two admirable volumes of Eastern travel, De Nerval is best known; and the origin of the work belongs to the most extraordinary incident of his life,—his wanderings in Egypt.

* *

*

Perhaps only a madman could have successfully carried out such a project of travel; for the Orientals, fiercely as they detest the Frank and the Christian, treat the insane with something of superstitious tolerance and even kindness. Gerard was permitted to sleep in the caravanseries, to smoke his narguilah in the *cafés*, to listen to the Arabian story-tellers reciting the legends of Islam in a tongue which he did not understand, to attend marriage-feasts and Moslem rites of various kinds—possibly to enter the holy mosques, for he did not fail to adopt the dress of the people in whose picturesque life he sought to mingle. Every incident described in his *Femmes de Caire* (*Women of Cairo*) is fact; nor has any doubt been thrown upon the narrative of his marriage. At some slave-mart or other he bought an Abyssinian girl, “yellow as gold”; he rented a queer

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Arabesque house in some obscure quarter of the city, and began housekeeping in Oriental fashion. The *ménage* was not a happy one;—a change came over the spirit of Gerard's Oriental dream. His African wife was young, passionate and petulant—little fitted to be the companion of a dreamer of dreams, who loved to sit speechless for hours meditating upon the magic of Hermes Trismegistus, or the mysteries of the Kabbala. She desired the things that are of this world—much petting and caressing, many comforts, pretty robes shot with silver and gold—the poetry of love rather than ecstasies about the chant of the muezzin and the tinkling of camel bells. She knew also that her sale to Gerard was illegitimate:—(was he not a “Christian dog”?) and De Nerval acknowledges that he was continually beaten by her. Whether he really repudiated her, as Maxime du Camp tells us, or whether she simply ran away from him, as recorded in the *Voyage en Orient*, is not positively known; but it is certain the twain lived together but a short time, and that the comely Abyssinian subsequently found a Turkish husband who suited her better, and by whom she had many children.

* *

*

There is only one characteristic of insanity in

A MAD ROMANTIC

these exquisite volumes wherein De Nerval has recorded his Oriental experiences,—and this is visible in the *Story of Balkis, Queen of the Morning*. It is the same characteristics which is observable in the wonderful pictures of the wonderful John Martin, who also died mad—*enormity of conception!* Meyerbeer at one time thought of utilizing Gerard's romance for an opera; but he found it too superhumanly large for any stage. Martin's picture of the Israelites leaving Egypt is a puny fancy compared with that scene of the Oriental narrative entitled *The Brazen Sea*, or that other scene in which the artificer *Adoniram* assembles by a mystical sign his nations of workmen, his legions of smiths and armies of carpenters. They are dreams of mountains wrought into statues so awful that God Himself dare not animate them,—of huge valleys converted into reservoirs supported by flying buttresses under whose curved shadows innumerable battalions might find shelter from the sun;—there are lightnings and Voices as of an Apocalypse;—there are exaggerations even of the enormous exaggerations of Arabian fancy. . . . But this very prodigiousness has its fascination:—one reads the story with such wonder as a volume written by the inhabitant of some other and larger planet might inspire.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

* *

*

Gerard returned from the East much madder than before,—really believing that the ruins of Egypt were fragments of the palaces of the Preadamite Kings,—that the Pyramids were the anvils upon which was wrought the magical buckler of Gian-ben-Gian,—and that Solomon really sat upon them to review his armies of *Djinns* and *Afrits*. Whatever means he had left was soon squandered in eccentricity. He wrote, but wrote less lucidly than before,—he composed poems strangely obscure, with only a few gleams of lucidity here and there,—gleams which Gautier had compared to the flashes emitted by some barbaric idol, covered with carbuncles and emeralds, in the darkness of a crypt. He could still readily procure a market for a certain class of articles; but the money thus earned he wasted in the purchase of artistic luxuries. Once he bought a magnificent bed, in which some queen had slept;—he had dreamed that an actress whom he secretly and silently loved—Jenny Colon—might one day slumber in it. The bed was so immense that he had to rent a costly apartment to place it in; when he became still more destitute he had it conveyed to a garret. His superstitious dread of parting with this ex-

A MAD ROMANTIC

pensive and cumbersome article served one good purpose—it secured him in a place of repose. He clung to it as long as he was able to earn or to borrow the price of rent. Finally it went the way of many other curious things. Gerard's brain was too much affected to enable him to make fresh successes in literature, and he became dependent upon the charity of Theophile Gautier and others who loved him for the ruined beauty of his mind and the exceeding goodness of his heart. But this condition must have been a torture to one who found Reality so false and Phantasy so real. Sometimes he starved rather than confess his hunger; sometimes he lied to save pain or expense to his friends. Like a shadow he walked the icy streets of wintry Paris by night, dreaming of the Impossible that he sought in vain,—also, doubtless, of the Orient that he had seen,—of the vast tropical sun,—of azure skies that never weep rain,—of the tinkling of far caravan bells,—of the fantastic streets of Cairo,—of the musical chant of the muezzin,—of those veiled women, whose raiment perfumed the air with odors of musk and frankincense,—of his Abyssinian bride, dark but comely as the curtains of Solomon. . . . One icy morning (Jan. 27, 1855,) his lifeless body was found hanging from the bar of an

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

iron grating in the *Rue de la Vielle Lanterne*.
Weary of the world's harsh realism, the
Dreamer of beautiful dreams had voluntarily
sought that eternal slumber that knoweth no
dream whether of good or evil.

THE IDOL OF A GREAT ECCENTRIC

It is not until many years after the decease of a distinguished author, that all the really noteworthy incidents of the man's life are so collated as to form a worthy biography; and it is only now, after the passing away of nearly every member of the grand literary company of 1830, that we are enabled to peep behind the scenes of that vast theatre of French Romanticism, whose *dramatic personæ* had previously appeared to us only in their literary apparel. The memoirs of Emile Bergerat and of Maxime du Camp were among the first important chapters of this biographical revelation,—prefaced many years ago by Theophile Gautier's *Histoire du Romantisme*. Arsene Houssaye has recently completed another chapter, and Theodore de Banville has just published one of the most delightful series of souvenirs ever printed. It is the latter work, now lying before us, which inspires these lines. So potent has been the influence of the Romantic school upon the literature of Europe in general, and upon English literature in particular, that the least details concerning the lives of the extraordinary writers who founded and vitalized

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

it must have interest for all lovers of *belles-lettres*.

It is curious that the lives of the great giants of the Romantic movement were much less wildly romantic than those of the brilliant but less fortunate men who followed after them. The career of Victor Hugo has flowed smoothly like a deep stream, interrupted in its course once or twice only by the earthquakes of political upheaval. Theophile Gautier lived the most placid of lives devoting all his prodigious talent to the support of his family, with indifferent success. When he traveled it was merely an artist's trip in search of new subjects—new studies of color and form. Both Hugo and Gautier found it best to study the Orient at Paris; and the latter's famous purpose of visiting India to translate the Mahabharata was never accomplished. Alfred de Musset, who wrote so many charming poems about Spain, never visited that country, and could not even be persuaded to accept an official position at Madrid. The romance of these lives was mostly confined within the walls of Paris. On the other hand, we find Gustave Flaubert making long and wonderful voyages to the East; Gerard de Nerval familiarizing himself with Oriental life, by renting an Arab house at Cairo, adopting the

THE IDOL OF A GREAT ECCENTRIC

Moslem dress and buying a wife at the slave-market,—some tawny girl who ran away from him upon discovering that he was “only a Christian dog.” Baudelaire had traveled over half the world before he attempted authorship;—and in his eyes, says Theodore de Banville, “there seemed to linger something of the strong light and the clear immensity of those far horizons which he had seen”—the lands of further India, Ceylon and the Malay peninsula, and the Indo-Chinese countries beyond. In some respects Baudelaire was certainly the most remarkable personage of his literary epoch.

In 1857 Baudelaire's collected poems were first brought out in book-form by Levy, of Paris, to the astonishment and horror of the public. *Flowers of Evil* is the translation of the title the volume still bears; and the alarm caused by the appearance and odor of these fantastic blossoms soon took active shape in a legal effort to eliminate the new vegetation from French literary soil. The book survived the attack, but it did not leave the courts unscathed;—several of the most extraordinary pieces, such as the *Metamorphoses du Vampire*, were suppressed, and have never, we believe, been republished. The press became afraid of the new author, and for the rest of his life he experienced the

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

greatest difficulty in persuading either journals or reviews to accept a piece signed with his name. After his death he obtained full justice, and the introduction of his complete works, written by Theophile Gautier, is certainly the finest critical article ever penned by that magician of language.

In its present shape, the volume contains 151 brief poems, resembling nothing else in the French language—marvelously original, audacious, terrible, but so exquisitely composed that it is doubtful whether they will ever cease to live. They have served as models of expression to Swinburne; and there is hardly a striking image or a strange thought in the earlier work of the great English lyrist which may not be found in the *Flowers of Evil*. And this astounding jewelry of verse, wrought as Gautier declares, with diamond-words,—with ruby, sapphire, emerald words, “words also which shine like phosphorus when rubbed,”—was formed into designs so hideous that a great critic did not hesitate to say there were only two things left for the author to do—“become a Christian or blow his brains out.”

The frightful piece *Une Charogne* (No. xxx), describing the corruption of a corpse in such fashion as no other writer, ancient or modern,

THE IDOL OF A GREAT ECCENTRIC

ever dared to do before or since, and the unspeakable revolting No. cxxxv (*Une Martyre*) represent the two extremes which brought the book to trial—the horrors of death and of vice described with fantastic cynicism and obscene truth. Strangely blended with these horrors the reader will find beauties of weird thought equal to the fancies of Poe (whom Baudelaire so well translated), and splendors of tropical imagination which seem the creations of hasheesh. Baudelaire could never forget the vast East,—the odors and colors and glories of Indian lands,—the statuesque grace of Javanese women,—the mighty vegetation of primeval forests. All that is tender and beautiful in his book has a tropical perfume,—potent enough to intoxicate the reader's brain.

The Flowers of Evil (*Fleurs du Mal*) wrote Gautier in speaking of Baudelaire's extraordinary volume of poems, "in no wise resemble those which usually form the bouquets of modern poetry. Their colors are metallic, their foliage black or glaucous, their calixes strangely striated; and theirs also is the vertiginous perfume of those exotic flowers which may not be smelt of without peril. They have sprung from the black soil of putrefying civilization;—they seem to have been brought to us from Java

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

or from Hindostan. . . . This poet feels an intense passion for exotic singularity. Throughout all his poems,—dominating their caprices, infidelities, and griefs,—obstinately reappears one strange figure—a venus moulded in African bronze, tawny but beautiful, *nigra sed formosa*, a species of black Madonna whose niche is always decorated with crystal suns, and bouquets of pearls. It is to her that he always returns after his voyage into the Land of Horror, to ask of her if not happiness, the boon of appeasement or oblivion. That savage mistress dumb and dark as a sphinx,—with her soporific perfumes and torpedo-caresses,—seems a symbol of true nature or primitive life to which the human heart turns when weary of the complications of civilized existence.”—(*Histoire du Romantisme*.)

Who this swarthy beauty was remained a mystery to the world at large for many years. Gautier hinted that she was only an ideal savage woman,—a sombre Eve specially created for the imaginary paradise of the poet. But the portraits of her which appear not only in the *Flowers of Evil*, but likewise in the *Prose Poems*, are so *naturally* minute that a careful study of Baudelaire would convince most readers to the contrary. “Supple and cajoling like the

THE IDOL OF A GREAT ECCENTRIC

black panther of Java" this woman really lived, and lived in Paris, and exercised unconsciously a wonderful influence upon the life and the work of the poet, who never wearied singing of her beauty.

She must have been the model for the *Dorothee* of the *Prose Poems*; she may have served for that of the Serpent Woman (No. xxix of the infernal bouquet), and that of the Malabaress (No. xcii) whose "dreams are full of humming birds," and whose eyes pensively seek through the foul fogs of Paris "for the ghosts of absent cocoa-palms." She is also the *Dorothee* of that wonderful bit of light and music and perfume *Bien lion d'ici* (No. xcix). In No. xxiv he sings of her hair,—“an aromatic forest, an ebony-sea whose blue-black billows bear him in fancy to far tropical ports full of golden glow, and odors of musk and cocoa,”—a thought beautifully repeated in the seventeenth of the *Prose Poems*,—*A Hemisphere in a Woman's Hair*. He describes her beauty as “tenebrous . . . swarthy as night, fantastic, obicreated”; . . . the perfume of her youth as “savage,” as “a mingling of Havanese odors with musk.” “When my desires go forth like a caravan, it is at the deep wells of thine eyes that their weariness finds refreshment”—(xxvii).

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Her eyes are again compared to "strange and charming minerals in which steel and diamond and gold are blended";—though there be moments when they become "soft as the moon"—(lix). In the same piece we have a study of eyes "ever-enticing in spite of sinister eye-brows,—odors of forest and desert,"—enigmatic and exotic beauty,—a sphinx "knowing the caresses that awake the dead, enchanting as a night in the Pampas,—dark and warm, yet oddly luminous."

The mystery is rather brutally revealed in the *Souvenirs* of Theodore de Banville (Paris: Charpentier, 1883): "As one may readily become convinced of by reading Baudelaire, the poet never really loved but one woman—that Jeanne whom he never ceased to sing of in so magnificent a way. She was *a colored girl*, of very lofty stature, and quite attractive with her dark, superb, ingenuous head, crowned with a mass of *violently-curling* hair. There was something at once divine and yet animal • in her queenly carriage, full of savage grace." Where the half-breed came from, however, we are not informed. Perhaps she was of that really superb type which inspired a celebrated French sculptor for his symbolic statue, *L'Afrique*.

Perhaps Baudelaire himself might have brought her back to Europe from some remote

THE IDOL OF A GREAT ECCENTRIC

colony of the Indian or African sea; for he was wont to do very strange things during his travels. Having been once sent with letters of credit and recommendation to some outlandish country, he wearied of his Creole hosts, and went off to the mountains to live among the savages, who cooked these extraordinary dishes for him of which we have a souvenir in the seventeenth of his prose-poems,—the “crabs stewed with rice and *saffron*.”

At all events, Jeanne was Baudelaire's model;—the word-painter sought from her all that the colorist seeks from living types, and yet something more,—the sense of tropical life, the indefinable and mysterious beauty created by interblendings of race, the type of savage grace, the dusky outward impassiveness that marks fantastic passion. She was the swarthy Aphrodite of his Indian Eden,—his bayadere, Javanese, Malabarese,—his tropical witch who evoked for him at will memories of far-away coasts, echoes of strange Eastern life, phantoms of Asiatic or African suns, luminosities and odors of equatorial ports and primeval woods. Utterly unconscious of the part she occupied in his life, the girl naturally believed her admirer mad;—wont, as he was, to dress her in oddly colored costumes of costly stuffs, and compel her to pose

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

for him, while he recited poetry to her in a tongue which she could not understand—perhaps his own poetry also, in which he threatens to return after death to give her “kisses colder than the moon.” Little did he then guess how soon death would come or in how dreary a shape,—slow paralysis of mind and body. Bitter-souled and brilliant of fancy like Heine, like Heine also he died,—though, perhaps even more miserably, speechless and thoughtless as any of those Orient idols whereof he had sung. Whether the dark woman tended him thus helpless, does not yet appear, nor has any mention been made of her fate—possibly and painfully suggested, no doubt, to many minds by the image of the *Malabaress* “trembling in the snow and sleet” of winter, and vainly gazing through the pallid Paris fogs for the ghosts of absent cocca-palms.

THE FRIENDS OF FLAUBERT

On another page * those of our readers interested in French literature will find some curious revelations in regard to the history of one of the greatest novels produced in this century,—Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. These revelations which have created such sensation in Parisian literary circles, naturally caused no little irritation to M. Maxime du Camp, who no doubt supposed that the second volume of his *Souvenirs*, published in 1883, had left nothing of importance to be said upon the history of Gustave Flaubert's work. Indeed we find on pages 241–2 of the *Souvenirs*, evidence that Maxime du Camp believed the whole of his correspondence with Flaubert to have been burned. It was destroyed, he says, “by mutual agreement, when the publication of Mérimée's *Lettres à Une Inconnue* first revealed to us what danger, to what abuse of trust one is exposed by the preservation of such private confidences in which plain words are not spared, and names are uttered without reserve . . .

* This refers to an account of the *Secret History of Madame Bovary* by Maupassant translated by Hearn for the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*.—*The Editor*.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Gustave saved about a dozen of my letters, which recalled some of our youthful escapades; I preserved about seven or eight of his, which possess a historical value. The others were burnt . . . not without regret." Now that it is discovered that they were not burnt, M. du Camp intends trying to prevent their publication. He claims these letters to be his own property; the *Revue Politique* claims that a letter is the property of the recipient, and after the recipient's death, the property of the heirs. An interesting legal process seems likely to follow. There is good reason to suppose, however, that Guy de Maupassant and the *Revue* publishers have taken excellent care the letters shall not be, in any event, finally destroyed. Correspondence of this character seems to have more than nine lives; and memoirs, supposed to have been repeatedly put into the fire, reappear at intervals with astounding obstinacy. A curious instance of this salamandrine vitality has just been afforded by the private *Memoirs of Heine*, which have suddenly turned up in spite of the positive declaration by Alexander Weill, in his recent book, that they were destroyed. They have already been sold to the editors of the Stuttgart *Gartenlaube* for 16,000 francs,—although written in pencil, and partly mutilated.

THE FRIENDS OF FLAUBERT

The exceedingly unpleasant part of Guy de Maupassant's revelation is the proof that Maxime du Camp's friendship was rather unfortunate for Flaubert—a fact otherwise tolerably well evidenced even by Du Camp's own memoirs, in which, while expressly denying that he ever considered himself the literary equal of the great novelist, he has nevertheless devoted much space to analysis of what he deemed the "weaknesses" of his friend. Du Camp, although now a member of the French Academy, certainly never wrote anything worthy to compare with *Salamambo*, with the *Trois Contes*, with *La Tentation de Saint-Antoine*, with *Madame Bovary*; but he has written two large volumes, chiefly, one might suppose, for the purpose of persuading the world that Flaubert's success was mostly due to the advice and the literary censorship of the author of the *Souvenirs*. Guy de Maupassant, who, although still very young, is indubitably one of the first writers in Europe, has undertaken to upset M. du Camp's pet hypothesis, and relieve the reputation of his dead friend and fellow-townsmen from the weight of those two volumes of academical criticism.

But for the influence of certain friends it is quite probable that Flaubert might have given the world a score of wonderful romances instead

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

of the half-dozen volumes which have been enough to make him one of the grandest figures in modern French literature. He began life with every advantage possible; he was sufficiently independent to be able to devote himself to art without concerning himself about the actual necessities of life; he possessed a giant's stature and strength, great personal beauty, and a prodigious memory. He was temperate and modest by nature, never indulged in excesses of any description, and appeared to live in total ignorance of the great personal fascinations which he involuntarily exercised upon the other sex. With such advantages and such gifts the future indeed looked bright for him, but an unexpected and terrible calamity came upon him while yet in the maturity of his youth and strength,—nervous epilepsy. This affliction wrecked his career and desolated his life. But in spite of it, he certainly produced work that will always hold a place apart among the masterpieces of the French language. Romantics and naturalists have both claimed him as belonging to their antagonistic schools;—but the truth is that Flaubert belonged to no school; that he did not even found a school—for he will ever remain inimitable that he followed no system, obeyed no particular literary canons, and sought only the

THE FRIENDS OF FLAUBERT

Strange and the Beautiful wherever he could find them. More especially the Strange—the marvelous, the weird, the exotic,—the beauty that is barbaric, the charms that are savage. Never did entomologist feel keener delight upon the discovery of a new variety of insect than did Gustave Flaubert at the discovery of a new word;—never did paleontologist experience a greater joy at unearthing the fossilized remains of some extinct creature than Flaubert knew when he could exhume some singular polysyllable from the forgotten speech of the middle ages. His life was one vast word-study,—one incessant research for linguistic curiosities;—he made enormous collections of words selected for color, for sonority, for glitter, even for certain fantastic arrangement of the letters. His style is less harmonious, less smooth to the eye than those of other contemporary writers; but other styles seem beside his, like classic architecture compared with Moresque. His pages blaze with color,—not color in familiar patterns, but color as of Oriental ornamentations, singular and surprising,—with flashes of jewel-work inlaid here and there. We do not refer to *Mme. Bovary* which does not reveal Flaubert's art-tendencies and capabilities; but to *Salamambo*, to the *Trois Contes*, to the *Tentation de Saint-Antoine*, to the

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

themes treated by him in his own way, and not suggested by friends unable to appreciate his higher genius.

When Flaubert first read his *Salamambo*,—(that extraordinary and startling Carthaginian romance, whose incidents are laid in the time of the War of the Mercenaries)—to one of his friends, he was told that if he published it, it would simply set all Paris laughing at him. He had spent nearly five years in writing that book; he had traveled to Africa to study the topography of each incident; he had devoured everything which the finest libraries in the world contained regarding the history, the religion, the archæology of ancient Carthage; he had made himself so learned upon the subject, that at a later day the *savants* who dared to criticize his story, found to their chagrin that the novelist knew more than they. Yet Flaubert believed his adviser, and coolly set to work to write the romance all over again—a fresh labor of years.

When he finished his *Tentation de Saint-Antoine*,—a book that cost him three years' incessant labor,—a prodigious phantasmagoria, in which the history of all religions, all magic, all thaumaturgy unrolls before the reader like a luminous panorama,—he read it to Maxime du Camp and Louis Bouilhet. They told him to

THE FRIENDS OF FLAUBERT

"throw it into the fire, and never to speak of it more,"—(these are the very words quoted by Maxime du Camp). He did not throw it into the fire; but wrote it all over again. Fearing it was still imperfect, he rewrote it a third time before venturing to publish it!

L'Education Sentimentale, first written in 1845, was published only in 1870 for apparently similar reasons. It is now almost unreadable,—the only one of his novels which may justly be considered a literary failure. What the first version of it was, M. du Camp probably knows better than any one else. Strangely enough, he speaks favorably of this work in his *Souvenirs Littéraires*.

Madame Bovary written at the instance of these precious friends, fared even worse. First of all it was "corrected and revised," page by page, by Louis Bouilhet; then it was entrusted to Maxime du Camp, whose treatment of it is related by Guy de Maupassant. Finally, after the mutilated remains had nearly all been published, the *Revue de Paris* took fright; and the tattered fragments were still further mutilated. (See pp. 201–2, Vol. II of the *Souvenirs Littéraires*.)

Even Flaubert's posthumous work, *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, published in its incomplete form in 1881, was cut to pieces by the censors, whole

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

pages being suppressed. Why? Maxime du Camp has not told us; he only states that "if the second unpublished part of the work was found the finders *acted wisely in not publishing it.*" Is it because this second volume, which was to be the vengeance of Flaubert upon the literary prudes of his day, really contained "*a dozen exquisitely silly observations,*" made by Du Camp himself? (See page 203, Vol. II, *Souvenirs.*)

The only book which seems to have escaped the "friendly revision of Du Camp, Bouilhet, or the official censors, is the *Trois Contes*,—three brief but consummately perfect stories, each of which took years to write. These stories show Flaubert's talent unchecked by "advice" and uninjured by "correction." What might *Salammbô* and other books have been if issued in their first form? It is possible that Flaubert's advisers meant well;—it is highly improbable they were judicious. None of those men were his equals in talent and learning. Their emasculation of *Madame Bovary* shows how small a value should have been placed upon their literary judgment. The only work by Flaubert which proved an utter failure, and which they induced him to waste years in re-writing, is praised by Du Camp quite as highly as *Salammbô*. The only volume they did not

THE FRIENDS OF FLAUBERT

mangle enjoyed immediate success, and will live as long as any volume of short stories produced during the same epoch. Flaubert, frank and confiding as a child, seems to have sacrificed the better part of his literary life to the whims of those he believed to be his friends, just as he finally sacrificed even his private fortune to relieve the real or pretended wants of those who claimed his charity.

AN ARCHÆOLOGICAL NOVEL

The announcement that Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* is shortly to appear in an English translation, has been telegraphed from London. No greater work of modern fiction was slower in obtaining English recognition; and the fact is honorable to the book. Just as in the physical world, the endurance of life is proportioned to the length of the period required for maturity,—so, also in the literary world, the longer the time elapsing before a volume obtains general popularity, the longer the work will endure after its merit has been appreciated. We have some instances of this kind in our own recent American fiction. Lew Wallace's *White God* may be said to have “fallen dead” upon the public when it first appeared years ago. It was too fine a book to become at once popular; and it won recognition abroad before obtaining the notice it deserved at home. Now, issued in a new dress, by the leading publishers of the United States, it has taken its place among those solid masterpieces which will live with another century.

Salammbô was, indeed, fully admired by con-

AN ARCHÆOLOGICAL NOVEL

noisseurs in all countries to which French literature finds its way, long before any attempt was made to translate the book into English. But it required no ordinary scholar to appreciate the vast research and the immense labor involved in its production. It is, perhaps, the grandest archæological novel ever written. The authors of *Le Roman de la Momie*, of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, of *The Gladiators*, of *Aurelia*, of many other stories of antique life, had their material already prepared for them in the museums and the libraries of Europe. But the plot of *Salamambo* is laid in Carthage, a city so utterly blotted out long before the Christian era, that no record of its life had been preserved worth speaking of. Antique war often meant something more than modern war—the extinction of a race, the obliteration of a site, the destruction of a language, and the abolition of a memory. The war of Rome against Carthage signified all these things;—it was resolved that even the remembrance of the great Punic army should be erased from history. The people were destroyed, the walls of their habitations razed to the ground, the monuments of their cemeteries demolished, the characters of their inscriptions upon the rocks effaced, the statues of their gods pulverized, the nomenclature of their

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

country changed. The very subject of Carthage became tabooed to Roman writers,—save inso-much as the mention of its destruction might redound to the glory of the destroyer. The policy of hatred was so thoroughly carried out that it recalls the custom of those Australian blacks, who, when a member of the tribe dies, forbid the use of any word which could by any chance recall his memory; and thus keep their language continually changing. We knew until within very late years much more of Troy than we knew of Carthage; since the phantom of the city gleams still for us over the sea-like song of Homer. But if Carthage had also a Homer, his songs have been as eternally lost as are the sounds of that nameless sea which once rolled its billows above the sands of the African desert.

However zealous and mighty be human rage, it is difficult for man to destroy forever,—it is almost impossible to annihilate. Archæologists of our own day have been able to discover in remote valleys inscriptions and remains that escaped the keen eye of Rome. Men endowed with vast powers of critical research, and an exhaustive knowledge of Semitic antiquities, have succeeded in reconstructing some vague outlines of the social and religious life of the republic. Geographers have attempted to restore theoreti-

AN ARCHÆOLOGICAL NOVEL

cally the site and plan of the metropolis, and their efforts appear to have been partially successful. But no special history of Carthage has yet been written; and it is doubtful whether enough will ever be known to justify such an undertaking. With the exception of the relations of Carthage to other nations, her wars with Rome and various powers, and her struggle for self-preservation against a revolt of her own mercenaries, the Greek and Roman historians have left us little information concerning that great Punic power which once possessed more than three hundred vassal cities, and was able to deluge Roman Italy with successive inundations of Berber cavalry.

Gustave Flaubert attempted to resurrect this vanished existence in *Salammbô*,—basing his narrative on the episode of the Revolt of the Mercenaries which occurred immediately after the First Punic War, and the knowledge of which we owe chiefly to Polybius. After having spent years in studying and digesting all that was known regarding the archæology and history of Carthage, Phœnicia, and Libya, he went to Africa; and under the terrible sun of Tunis minutely studied the scenery for every chapter of his novel. His thorough preparation was admirably shown at a later day when he replied

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

to the critic Fræhner, who found fault with the archæology of *Salamambo*, and who was badly worsted with his own weapons. In all later editions of the French novel, the replies of Flaubert to Fræhner form an interesting feature of the Appendix. It is to be hoped they will also appear in the English version.

In point of descriptions,—often archæologically valuable, and always full of artistic puissance,—the century has probably produced no volume equal to *Salamambo*. It is the masterpiece of a very great master, who combined the fancy of a Dore with the word-power of a Gautier—and toned the whole with a realism peculiarly his own. Many of the pictures are so frightful that they can no more be erased from the memory than the recollection of some horrible personal experience. Furthermore Flaubert's descriptions have in other respects the merit of absolute novelty. He depicted what no other author ever attempted;—such as the attack of a Greek phalanx by desert horsemen and mercenary infantry;—the terrible living machine continually varying its form in geometrical figures according to the pressure of battle, but ever retaining a mathematical outline. There is a description of the Temple of Tanit that makes the flesh creep,—a description of

AN ARCHÆOLOGICAL NOVEL

such sombre magnificence that the reader feels as dazed and awestruck as if actually passing through the scenes described. As for Salammbo herself,—the beautiful priestess, and bride of the Sacred Serpent,—who surrenders her life and her honor to recover the Holy Veil,—be it remembered that the chapter devoted especially to her has already inspired the production of some exquisite canvases. Flaubert's work is indeed worthy of inspiring even an Alma Tadema for archæological composition, or a Dore for sinister effects. To select at random a brief descriptive passage for translation, what could be more effective than this scene of carrion-birds:—

. . . Even the sanction of the Gods was not wanting for the slaughter;—inasmuch as the ravens descended at once from all the ends of heaven. They flew whirling through the air, with great hoarse cries; and formed one enormous cloud, that seemed to circle, to revolve unceasingly upon its own centre. It was visible even from far-off Clypea, from Rhadés, and from the promontory of Hermæum. Sometimes it suddenly burst open, widening its black spirals in the distance:—it was because an eagle had plunged down through the midst, and flown away again! Upon the terraces, the domes, the points of the obelisks, the entablatures of the temples, great birds were perched, with shreds of human flesh in their reddened beaks.

A GREAT PROSATEUR

Guy de Maupassant, unknown a few years ago, has suddenly become a figure to which the attention of the foreign literary world is directed. The seeming dwarf, who, with half a dozen others, only obtained notice at first by holding up the Rabelaisian train of Zola, has rapidly developed into a giant, and established an independent art of *belles-lettres*. He has already been compared, as a stylist, to Voltaire, to Mérimée, and to Balzac. No one of these comparisons will bear close examination; for Maupassant has not the severe beauty of Voltaire,—nor that compressed but invisible force, as of electricity stored-up, peculiar to Mérimée,—nor yet the imaginative fecundity of Balzac. But he certainly possesses a unique intensity and individual strength which entitles him to occupy a place apart. Judging from photographs, and descriptive chroniques, the man is like the style,—young, ardent, athletic, sensual, sensitive to beauty, and cynical withal. Everything about Maupassant indicates power,—the columnar neck, the vigorously curling hair, the keen eyes, set far back into their orbits, as in the

A GREAT PROSATEUR

faces of wrestlers. The picture is refreshing by contrast with the morbid preoccupation and unhealthy gloom of Zola,—who rarely laughs or weeps,—has seldom excited a noble sentiment or a joyous smile,—and seems wholly devoid of esthetic feeling. The pupil partly shares the cynicism, but not the passionlessness of the master. He was cast in a romantic mould; and the influence of the grosser school has not quenched his idealism. But it has occasionally manifested itself in unhealthy eruptions of obscenity, which mar the value of such romances as *Une Vie*, or *La Maison Tellier*. Luckily for Maupassant, although Zola first introduced him to public favor, a far grander teacher prepared him for the literary struggle. This tutor was Gustave Flaubert, whom he met in Rouen, while himself still a schoolboy. Flaubert always kindly listened to the young man's first essays, in poetry or prose, and never failed to give him the best advice of which he was capable. Still, such an adviser was not easy to obey. Merciless to himself, Flaubert was not inclined to overlook the weaknesses of other writers. His injunctions to Maupassant resulted in the destruction by the latter of nearly everything which he wrote before his twenty-fifth year. The discipline was harsh but excellent in its results; for when

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Maupassant presented his first exquisite romance to the public, a thrill of admiration was felt throughout the Parisian world of *belles-lettres*.

This romance forms one of the extraordinary collections of naturalistic stories published a few years ago under the patronage of Zola (who wrote the introductory tale), and under the title of *Les Soirées de Medan*. None of the other young writers who contributed to that volume have since risen to eminence; but had Maupassant never written anything save *Boule-de-Suif*, his name would endure in literature. Such originality of style, audacity of conception, keenness of observation, cynical truth in descriptions of human nature, had not found expression in France for half a century. The novelette compelled attention to its author, and fairly flung fame into his face. Publishers offered him their services; and since 1880 he has given the press no less than seven books,—not to speak of multitudinous essays, reviews, etc., contributed to leading periodicals.

This rate of production seems, and probably is, excessive on the part of a writer little more than thirty years of age. But Maupassant, unlike most *litterateurs*, is a shrewd business man, and writes for money. A good thing for Maupassant but an unfortunate circumstance for art!

A GREAT PROSATEUR

Everything which he writes is sold in succession to various publishers. First, the daily newspaper purchases the work for its feuilleton; then the right to republish in book-form is sold to a Belgian firm for one year,—at the expiration of which the volume is reprinted in Paris. No wonder Maupassant lives elegantly, and has been able to build himself a handsome home at Etretat. Still, there is very little material in his books—the text is padded out to its utmost with triple-leading and deep spacing; the paper is thick and heavy. One volume of Zola contains as much reading-matter as three volumes by Maupassant. This partly accounts for the extraordinary number of books which the latter has written in so brief a period. It is questionable whether this rapidity of production does not interfere with perfection; but there can be no doubt whatever that his purpose of profit has interfered with his art. Obscenity is lucrative at present; and, although Maupassant has not as yet indulged in those unprecedented monstrosities which figure in Chapt. XVI of *Pot-Bouille*, and atrociously befoul the latter part of *La Joie de Vivre*, he has profited enough by the lesson of Zola's financial successes to make his own works gratify the same unhealthy curiosity.

Boule-de-Suif,—was followed by *Mademoi-*

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

selle Fifi, a volume dealing chiefly with immoral phases of life; and *Mademoiselle Fifi* was surpassed in impropriety by its successor *La Maison Tellier*. At this point every respectable critic in Paris remonstrated. Albert Wolff especially made an appeal to the young writer not to prostitute his superb talent by the treatment of indecent subjects, and very pertinently asked him whether a great artist should always content himself by painting one picture over and over again. Maupassant does not, however, seem to have been converted. His next volume of short stories—*Contes de la Becasse*—was indeed less objectionable and equally artistic; but his ~~first~~ novel which appeared about the same time, surpassed Belot in the insolence of its impropriety. It is, in all respects, Maupassant's last creditable production; but its creation justified his financial perspicacity,—for it reached a twenty-fifth edition in less than six months. *Une Vie* is the story of an unhappy 'married life, minutely chronicled with unutterably precise details of conjugal infelicity and infidelity. Its worst pages show the influence of Zola more strongly than anything else Maupassant has written while its plot reveals a rather unexpected poverty of invention. The style is indeed superb, but the subject is not worthy of the pen.

A GREAT PROSATEUR

It remains to be seen whether his new novel *L'Heritage* will prove him to possess that sustained power of invention in which *Une Vie* reveals him inferior to other leading spirits of the new school. But as a writer of short stories he has no living superior—not even Daudet, whose beautiful *nouvelles* are far from comparison with the intense force and violent grace of Maupassant's sinewy work.

After *Une Vie*, no one would have imagined Maupassant capable of entering that exotic sphere of writing in which Pierre Loti stood alone. But he has done so very successfully. Sailing to Algeria in mid-summer, he traveled through the country in the company of certain Spahi officers, and returned to Paris to publish that wonderful book—*Au Soleil*—which has just appeared. With the solitary exception of Loti's *Suleima* and *Les Trois Dames de la Kasbah* (just published), no such attempt has ever been made to word-paint Algeria in a volume of travel. Certainly Maupassant cannot reflect in his pages the *romance* of an Oriental country as Loti has done;—to do so one must have the temperament of a poet, the observation of a philosopher, the melancholy of a pantheist. Where Loti finds thoughts to charm, Maupassant often discovers facts to revolt. But he photo-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

graphs in colors with that wonderful style of his—surprises as much as Loti enchants. One prefers Loti. One would rather live under the wondrous impressions he has created,—with art delicate as the magic of the mirage,—than in the sharply and painfully defined, positive knowledge given by Maupassant. Still, in point of intrinsic value the style of Maupassant was never revealed to better advantage,—as subsequent translations from *Au Soleil* will show our readers. Unfortunately this book also has the glaring flaw from which none of Maupassant's creations are exempt. The satyr temperament of the man betrays itself in the narrative of facts or incidents which modern travelers refrain from even hinting at. But the book has revealed unexpected capacities on the part of its author—capacities that promise much for his literary future, in that day when he shall have ceased to write primarily for profit or pander to corrupt taste. When so young a man has been able in so short a time to place himself in the front rank of French prose-writers, there is every reason to believe that his artistic sense must ultimately lead him to higher moral levels than he has yet trodden.

LITERARY PESSIMISM

Of the last of Guy de Maupassant's novels,—*Bel-Ami*,—Jules Lemaître recently wrote that he knew of no book at once so fascinating and so sickening. This eminent reviewer could not have uttered a more forcible criticism in fewer words. The book is fascinating, because written with a power which reveals its author to be the greatest of living realists,—greater even than his master Flaubert;—it is sickening, because of its hideous presentation of certain phases of human character. The absolute icy calm of the style,—the steely nerve of the psychological dissector,—only augments the horror of the operation. It is the work of one who handles a pen like a bistoury,—ever seeking for moral lesions which he never fails to find. All forms of humanity upon which the literary autopsies are performed are viewed as so many *corpora vili*;—he is simply giving us demonstrations of mental anatomy;—no utterance of sympathy ever escapes him. There is no conclusion; there is no moral;—there is only the possible inference which the reader is tempted to draw:—*All human beings are either fools or*

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

knaves. A feeling of astonishment is excited by the mere fact that such a book is the creation of a young man; and one cannot help marveling at the decomposition of a society in which he could have acquired so much morbid knowledge within so brief a space of time. England has no similar society;—America has none; let the English-speaking races congratulate themselves!

Especial attention has been created by this book because it is a masterpiece of literary workmanship; but aside from its high superiority in this particular, it is only one of a type,—a type of thought which is unfortunately growing. The talented writers who produced such books as *Sapho*, as *La Joie de Vivre*, as *Germinal*, as *Cruelle Enigme*, as *Une Vie*,—have all been formed in a school of pseudo-positive-philosophy which teaches that life is not worth living. Their method is familiar—needless to discuss it. But it is really the fruits of their studies, however perfectly shaped, that invariably contain beneath their rind ashes and bitterness. All alike are creations of disappointment and despair,—skepticism and irony. All are especially marked by regret and horror,—lamentation for the brief duration of youth, and nightmarish dread of death. Who that has read the original pages of *La Joie de Vivre* can forget

* LITERARY PESSIMISM

Lazare's fear of death,—his awakenings in darkness with a ghastly terror before him, the terror that even the companionship of marriage, and the sentiment of fatherhood cannot overcome? There is a Lazare in all these realistic studies,—a hysterical shuddering at the mere thought of death, whether that thought cometh in the broad noonday or walketh in darkness. Why? Is not life an illusion according to these philosophers,—a deception, a mockery, a bitterness? So the realists declare; and yet the prospect of the eternal sleep fills them with agony, with visions of frenzy, with a despair so hideous and so strange that it appears to constitute a special form of mental disease,—a disease begotten by the French pessimism of the nineteenth century. And are these the sons of a race of soldiers? Happily such pessimism has not yet affected the Anglo-Saxon race;—the old Gothic scorn of death and pride of life and strength of honor remains!

Here is one specimen of the peculiar pessimism alluded to, which Maupassant puts into the mouth of Norbert de Varrence, a typical Parisian journalist:—

. . . "What matters if one have a little more or less genius, since all things have an end? . . . Life is like a

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

hill-slope; while climbing up one keeps gazing at the summit, and feels happy; but when one has got to the top, then he sees at one glance the whole descent before him, and the end of it—which is death. You climb up slowly; but you go down very quickly once you begin to descend. . . . There must come a day for all—(and it comes very early for some people)—when there is an end of all laughter, because one perceives the face of death behind all things that meet his gaze. . . . To breathe, to sleep, to drink, to eat, to work, to dream,—whatever we do,—is dying! Aye! even to live is to die!

“What do you wish for?—love? A few kisses more and all is over. Money? What for—to give to women?—to expend in the pleasure of eating a great deal, becoming obese, and shrieking all night with the gout? And glory? What is it worth if you cannot gather its fruit in the shape of love? . . . Death embitters, spoils all that I do, all that I see, all that I eat, all that I drink, all that I love—the moonlight nights, the sunrises, the vast sea, the fair rivers, the air of summer evenings that is so sweet to breathe.

“. . . And no being ever returns—never, never. . . . Men preserve the moulds of statues, the imprints from which similar objects can be remade;—but my body, my features, my thoughts, my desires, will never appear again. . . . And millions and thousands of millions of human beings will be born; all of whom will have,—within the space of a few square inches of face,—a nose, a pair of eyes, a forehead, cheeks, and a mouth like I

LITERARY PESSIMISM

have,—yes, and a mind like I have; but I—I shall never, never come back;—and not even will the least recognizable atom of me ever reappear among all those creatures, innumerable and all different,—indefinably different,—although similar in general aspect.

“To what can one become attached? To whom can we utter our cries of distress? In what can we believe. All religions are stupid. Death alone is a certainty.” . . .

How noble appears the work of Victor Hugo beside such pessimism as this; Victor Hugo the grand idealist, who never feared death! . . . The false positivism of the realist is a malady,—a horrible disease that threatens to become epidemic. Schooling oneself to seek only after *certainties*, and to find at last that death is the only certainty, is surely the beginning of madness! And this truthfulness to the better part of one's own nature,—this negation of idealism,—this ridicule of aspiration,—this monstrous despair, artificially cultivated like a venomous plant in a hothouse—bringeth its own punishment. He that looketh into charnel-pits shall behold worms only, and corruptions. No greater proof of the necessity of the ideal to human nature, of the need of the impossible and the unreal to the human heart, could have been given than what

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

French realists have given us in their frightful creations—literary fungi begotten of social rotteness, morbid and fantastic growths engendered by that loss of faith in human nature, which is also a loss of conscience.

SOLITUDE

The very strange study by Maupassant, entitled *Solitude*, which appears upon another page of this issue,* contains a thought worthy of more consideration, perhaps, than the author himself has cared to bestow upon it. One of the strongest characteristics of this prince of story-tellers is lavishness;—he compresses into a few pages the materials of a whole novel, and appears to have such confidence of creative power that he can afford to pluck all his literary fruit while yet green. He has thrown out to the world scores of undigested plots, any one of which might have made the fortune of a clever novelist,—scorning to develop the theme according to any romantic precedent. There is, perhaps no other living writer who could so well afford to do this;—Maupassant appears to afford it with an ease not less wonderful than his strength of style; for every six months he can present the public with a fresh volume. All his stories, indeed, are not stamped with the peculiarity referred to;—some are mere photographs of life taken at random,—

* This refers to a translation of *Solitude* made by Hearn in the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*.—*The Editor*.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

incidents of an afternoon or evening,—studies in a railroad car or a *diligence*,—anecdotes gleamed at receptions or balls,—scenes rapidly sketched upon a boulevard or at the foot of an Opera-stairway. But aside from these, he has written a wonderful number of sketches so unquestionably original, and yet at the same time so suggestively incomplete, so tantalizingly abrupt, that the reader experiences a sort of pained surprise at finding such riches flung abroad as carelessly as beggar's coin. This Rothschild of modern French fiction seems to have no time to work as others have worked before him and must continue to work after him; the fertility of his resources is such that life appears too brief for any attempt to utilize them fully. Zola would have written a five-hundred-page novel upon such a theme as *Solitude*; Maupassant writes ten and produces an equally durable effect upon the reader's mind. That is the difference! It is lamentable, indeed, that so prodigious a talent should ever waste itself upon subjects tabooed by morality and good taste; and that nine-tenths of its production must always remain untouched by English translators. *

But in *Solitude* we have an idea worth dwell-

* English translators however have since given us Maupassant almost completely.—*The Editor*.

SOLITUDE

ing upon,—an idea which seems sufficiently well-preserved for study in our hasty English version of it, although the sketch loses greatly by translation. Inspired, apparently by the recital of some curious hallucination, and developed merely into a conversational fragment, the thread of thought so abruptly terminated by the ingenious writer himself, might be taken up at either end and pursued to very startling lengths. Following the clew backward would lead us into the most extraordinary realms of medical psychology,—into secret chambers of mentality, whose windows look out upon the infinite. Pursuing it in the opposite direction, from the point at which the writer dropped it, would lead us to the much more vapory but not less interesting realm of philosophical speculation,—to the extreme limits of that idealism circled by the Unknown. In fact behind the strange mask of madness, or pessimism, or aberration, which the figure of the story wears, there is an idea so subtle that Maupassant might have been afraid to develop it himself. It could only be developed by men thoroughly capable of following his suggestion to either extremity,—the profound Western physician, or the profound Eastern philosopher; and either end of the line touches the verge of the Unknow-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

able. There is a peculiar nervous mental affection, *demophobia*,—the horror of crowds,—or of contact with people in general. The affliction of Maupassant's solitary is the antipodes of this form of abberation, and yet represents such a returning of the mind upon itself as must eventually develop it. One question to consider is whether the first condition could be possible as *a permanent state* of mind; but it is a question which belongs to the alienist. Another question is whether one phenomenal human mind may not develop certain functions or ideas incomprehensible to all other human minds. This might, we think, be answered in the affirmative; for such men as the Mezzofantis and Magliabecchis and certain mathematical prodigies manifested the possession of powers of a totally unfamiliar order, through results to be obtained only by mental processes which the ordinary man has no knowledge of, and could not understand any more than a man blind from his birth could understand the sensation of color. But the possession of such faculties would not necessarily render the possessor miserable through any feeling of mental isolation.

Maupassant's intellectual hermit does not, however, suffer from any sense of an incomprehensible and undivined superiority. He claims

SOLITUDE *

simply to have discovered the fact that "nobody can understand anybody"—*personne ne comprend personne!* It is true that we know each other only by inferences,—analogies. Now, are these wholly trustworthy? Have there ever been in this world two minds precisely alike,—two voices with exactly the same *timbre*,—two blades of grass absolutely indistinguishable,—two grains of sand in all respects similar? No! Then there is a vague truth, is there not, behind the assertion that *personne ne comprend personne?* Exaggerate the nature of this differentiation as madness might exaggerate it, or as a nightmare might distort it, and the sense of total solitude becomes comprehensible. But in sober moments could a man reason thus against himself, or fail to recognize, if he did, that such isolation as his individuality gives him is simply the reason of his existence!

Now, however, comes in a possible fancy which seems to us the most interesting suggestion of the sketch—an application of the evolutionary law to this sense of isolation, faintly existing in every thinker; for there are moments in all lives when one suffers, or fancies that one suffers, from not being understood. According to the law of progress this sense of self-isolation would tend to become incomparably stronger.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

in the future, as individuality must be enormously intensified. No conservative forces are conceivable which would check this development of personal differentiations; neither educational systems, beliefs, pursuits, social customs nor climatic and geographical influences. The whole tendency of the age is toward specialism. Imagine this differentiation of individuality developed to the highest possible pitch, and strive to picture the possible result! Would it be such a result as the Maupassant sketch hints at?—each man dwelling in a mental desolation impenetrable to all but himself, and longing for his absorption into nature, through death, as the only means of escaping from his solitude?

A DEFENSE OF PESSIMISM

Satire, indeed, is a poor defense of pessimism; yet it forms the worthless armor in which Guy de Maupassant—(who calls Schopenhauer “that admirable and all-mighty German philosopher whose genius to-day dominates and governs all the youth of the world”)—seeks to protect his theories. Aroused by a criticism from M. Ludovic Halevy, Maupassant rushes into print with an article entitled *Our Optimists* which would be as amusing as it is well written, but for the fact that the adversary attacked is not in a position to be ridiculed. His argument cannot be answered by irony, nor his reproofs met by mockery. M. Maupassant at first contents himself by sarcastically suggesting laws for the suppression of pessimism, based upon the assumption that vice and misery exist only as false appreciation of fact. Upon this theory M. Maupassant observes that every Frenchman ought to consider the death of his children as a relief,—the death of his parents as an improvement in his condition,—the death of his comrades as joyous little festivals,—and his own demise

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

as a glorious triumph. Finally, weary of sarcasm, he asks:—

—“Let us look about us. Have we one cook in a thousand, one good bottle of wine in ten thousand, one good bottle of brandy in fifty thousand? Hardly! . . . Is there one good writer in a hundred, one good book in a hundred thousand, one honest financier in ten thousand, one upright merchant in twenty, one good play in a hundred, one good general in fifty, one good doctor in a thousand? Scarcely? . . . Do we find more than one pretty woman in five hundred? No! Do we find more than one fine horse in five thousand? No! Do we have more than one really fine day in twenty? No! Do we meet more than one really learned man in fifty thousand? No! Do we find more than one remarkable painter in a hundred? No! Or more than one good servant in a hundred? No!” . . .

But what is the value of this species of argumentation in the question at issue? Absolutely nothing! No optimist has ever denied that virtue, merit, beauty are things of price,—for the very reason that they are uncommon. *“Who shall find a valiant woman?—far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her!”*—saith quaint Ecclesiastes. But to reason that because filth is more common than rubies,—that swine are

A DEFENSE OF PESSIMISM

more plentiful than eagles,—we should especially devote our attention to filth and to swine, would surely seem the utterance of a depraved mind. It is not possible to believe that Maupassant, who has given ample evidence in certain directions of appreciation of the beautiful, could seriously intend such sentiments to be taken as dogmas of his own philosophy. Is it by the continuous contemplation of evil, the perpetual analysis of vice, the constant examination of uncleanness, that men are to ascend “upon the stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things?” Assuredly not! Naturalism is strangely at variance with its own philosophy in this respect; for it professes to accept evolution. Were the metallic colors of the humming-bird, the sapphire brilliancy of the beetle, the velvet magnificence of the butterfly, due to the operation of unmixed evil? Was it by watching the dust beneath his feet that man learned to know a Creator? or was it by lifting his eyes to the splendid heaven with its mysteries of color, its phenomena of cloud and storm, its eternally burning constellations? Was the art of the sculptor evolved by the contemplation of the bodies of the halt, the lame, and the blind? Was the genius of the poet created by the knowledge of brutalities, of cowardices, and of selfishnesses?


ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

The very strongest possible argument against pessimism in literature is furnished by the identical truths which Guy de Maupassant cites in its favor. It is not by gazing at his hectic pallor in a mirror, that the consumptive can make himself robust; it is not by meditation upon the loathsomeness of an ulcer that it can be cured. The fact that there is much evil in the world is what gives especial worth to the good which is in the world, and which may be found by all who care to seek for it. But to pass one's life and to lavish one's talent's in preaching that Evil is the rule of life and the law of society, while Good is only the exception, the petty discordance, the pathological curiosity of existence,—is to sin against humanity, against one's self, and against the law of the universe. It has been said that men become good by the comprehension of evil;—but the comprehension of evil is possible only by the knowledge of its opposite! Consequently it is only by a very uncommon familiarity with that which they dare to deny to the majority of mankind, that such pessimists as Guy de Maupassant are capable of creating pictures which shock all refined sensibilities.

Why, then, having so broad and so profound an appreciation of what is admirable, should they prefer to depict only that which is repellant and

A DEFENSE OF PESSIMISM

hideous? Neither Maupassant nor Zola nor any other pessimist could presume to deny that man has progressed in knowledge, in goodness, in nobility since the beginning of modern history. He is mentally a larger and loftier being than the men of the antique civilization; he has risen above their ethics, improved upon their philosophies, excelled their laws. How did he conceive the idea of better things before these better things existed? By experimentation, the Zolaite would answer. Good!—but the very term of experiment includes the conception of an idea, of an idealism,—of that precise necessity of the human race which the Literature of Brutality denies in vain!



WOMEN OF THE SWORD

The perusal of Vigeant's *Maître d'Armes Sous la Restauration*,—the charming volume from which we have already made some extracts,—forcibly recalls to memory certain incidents of two famous romances: De Quincey's *Spanish Nun*, and the chef d'œuvre of Theophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Most of our readers are probably familiar with the former immortal essay, and are consequently aware that the narrative is founded upon authentic documents, and that the wanderings of Catalina have been written of in nearly all the languages of modern Europe. Perhaps De Quincey's relation is a little prolix at times, and pathos was not a characteristic quality with him; yet so marvelous were the facts he treated, and so singular the pathos of them, that none who reads the story can ever forget the emotions it evokes. Still, some of Catalina's feats appear superhuman. We can readily comprehend how the girl—a daughter of warriors—could not submit to the restraint of the convent in which she was immured against her will;—we can believe the story of her escape, of her first essay at tailoring in the forest, of her being received into the

WOMEN OF THE SWORD

suite of the rich and quarrelsome hidalgo who was sufficiently impressed with the "boy's" handsome figure and handsome eyes to clothe him in silk and velvet livery. What is less easy to believe is the account of the girl's wonderful swordsmanship,—of the multitude of duels from which she always came out victorious. It was in the natural order of things that so handsome a person, wearing the highly picturesque military costume of the epoch, should have excited many furious jealousies and fruitless loves; but it is indeed difficult to comprehend the terrible skill with which she cut her way out of every difficulty,—until fighting single-handed against three powerful swordsmen, she received a wound that resulted in the astonishing discovery of her disguise. Moreover, it must be remembered that in those days the Spanish school of swordsmanship was famous; and Catalina must have worsted many a "good rapier" to have saved her own pretty brown skin.

On the other hand, we know these things were believed in Catalina's lifetime. Princes would have been proud to wed her after the secret of her sex was discovered; but Catalina seems never to have found the peace of home or to have known the peace of love; and where she found at last the rest that may not be broken, was never known "either to the Father of Spanish Camps, who sat

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

at Madrid,—nor to Kate's spiritual Father, who sat at Rome."

To turn from the *Spanish Nun* to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, might seem like leaving the world of fact for the paradise of poetic fancy. Gautier's portrait of the young cavalier is no doubt a fantasy, but a fantasy as beautiful as anything imagined in the nineteenth century. . . . "I felt a strange affection for the young cavalier, at merely seeing him descend from his horse. No human being could be more graceful; he is not very tall, but so supple and elegantly built: there is something soft and undulating in his walk and his every gesture—something unutterably pleasing; many a woman might well envy such feet and hands. His sole defect is that he is too handsome,—that his features are too delicate for a man. He has a pair of eyes—the finest black eyes in the world—which have an indefinable expression, and whose gaze it is rather difficult to sustain; but as he is still very young, and has no sign of a beard, the soft and perfect lines of the lower part of his face temper the keenness of those eagle-pupils; his dark lustrous hair flows down over his neck in large curls, giving his head a very characteristic look. . . . There is some sorcery here. . . . It is monstrously impossible! God never furnished the eyelids of a man with silky fringes, so dark, so

WOMEN OF THE SWORD

long. . . . Yet this is indeed the wild rider, the reckless duelist, the daring huntsman. . . .”

The scenes are of course laid in an epoch of such picturesque costumes as might have easily enabled a tall and lithely built woman to disguise her sex; but the apparent effeminacy of such a “youth” would certainly have been likely to provoke occasional insults that could only be wiped out in blood. The illustrations of Louis Leloir in the new Conquet edition do some justice to the descriptions of Gautier, and enables one not a thorough artist to comprehend the picturesqueness of the incidents;—Giraud’s etchings in the Charpentier edition are too stagey and flat. Those familiar with Meissonier can also recollect his terrible duel scenes in the French aristocratic world of a few centuries ago,—those splendid youths with Raphaelite faces, but whose conventional smiles are so fraught with sinister meaning. That was the world of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

Perhaps some of our readers will be surprised to learn that this exquisitely wrought fancy of the French novelist was actually founded upon fact,—that “Theodore de Serranes” had a real female prototype whose name was also Maupin. Vigeant, the great bibliographer of the history of fencing, tells us something about her. She flourished in that luxurious epoch described by

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Saint-Simon; and was not less expert as an equestrian than as a fencer. The use of the rapier was first imparted to her by a rare master in the art,—the Baron de Sésane; and she earned her livelihood for a considerable time by her skill with the sword. Finally the fancy seized her to go upon the stage, where she obtained a fair success. Unfortunately her temper was dangerous. One evening behind the scenes she overheard an actor named Dumesnil gossiping about her. Next evening, as Dumesnil was on his way to the theatre, he found himself suddenly confronted by a young cavalier, sword in hand, who observed in a peculiarly argentine voice:—"I trust, Monsieur Dumesnil, that after your villainous remarks of last evening, you will have no objection to do a little throat-cutting with me!" In that day everybody wore a sword. Dumesnil recognized the terrible amazon, wisely declined the duel, and deemed himself lucky to get off with a good caning.

La Maupin always donned masculine attire in private life; and as she was not so well able to preserve her incognito as Gautier's charming "Theodore," sundry draw-can-sirs occasionally thought it safe to make remarks. Safe it seldom proved to be. Not long after the Dumesnil incident, Le Maupin publicly insulted three gentle-

WOMEN OF THE SWORD

men of the sort above referred to; and succeeded in making them lose their temper. "Sirs," cried the terrible woman, "I will give you all the satisfaction you want! I will either fight each of you in turn, or the whole three of you together:—it is a matter of indifference to me!" The young cavaliers agreed to fight her in succession;—*she killed the whole three*. But this affair aroused the police authorities against her, and she was compelled to flee from Paris. . . . Such was the strange woman whose history inspired Theophile Gautier with the idea of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

* *

*

To those who know little of the secrets of swordsmanship the feats of Catalina and of La Maupin might well seem incredible—especially in an era when the art in which they excelled was almost universally professed by the upper classes. How could the delicate wrist of a woman acquire the supple strength required for a life-and-death encounter with sinewy troopers or professional *maîtres-d'armes*? Woman cannot often now, as in the old barbarian days, find either the strength or the courage requisite for battle duty;—since the era of Tacitus woman must have lost in force what she may have gained in beauty; there are

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

few white maiden arms now capable of hurling a stone "with the force of a catapult." But those versed in the art of the sword are well aware how little mere brute force weighs in the balance of life and death against cool skill; and the history of fencing gives us many noteworthy instances of gigantic strength foiled by scientific training. Even now we observe in the daily papers of Paris—where fencing has again become a fashionable sport among ladies—accounts of some dainty swordswomen whom it would be very unsafe for ordinary fencers to seriously provoke. What training may accomplish with women is perhaps best shown in Vigeant's account of Jean-Louis' daughter.

It were hard indeed to say whether the Chevalier de Saint-George—(also of San-Domingo origin)—or Jean-Louis was the more perfect master of the art; but we may believe with Vigeant that the latter will always remain the "grandest figure in the history of the nineteenth century fencing." Vigeant's father studied long under Jean-Louis—who only died in 1865—and Vigeant himself, now one of the greatest living teachers of the art, acknowledges having disciplined himself according to Jean-Louis' rules for ten years without intermission. What Jean-Louis himself was capable of our readers have

WOMEN OF THE SWORD

already learned from the story of the famous duel against thirteen fencing-masters, which was not long since published in these columns. He was one of the great *benefactors* of fencing, to use Vigeant's term—having suppressed all useless sword play, all fancy fencing—and reduced the French system to its present matchless severity, which places it far above the Florentine and other foreign school systems.

This severely perfect method he taught to his daughter, partly indeed to gratify her own wishes, but chiefly, no doubt, to show what his lessons could accomplish even with a young girl. After two years training he considered her sufficiently expert to invite some of the best fencers in Paris to witness an exhibition of her skill. Her first adversary was a professional fencing-master, who was so chagrined at being shamefully worsted by a girl of nineteen, that he only acknowledged his defeat when Mlle. Jean-Louis proposed to remove the buttons from both foils! The best amateurs shared his defeat; and the young woman showed such extraordinary skill that she was even regarded as capable of succeeding her father as a teacher. But some time after these remarkable victories, she married a Dr. Veillard, of Toulouse, and abandoned the foil forever. The marriage was happy, but of

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

brief duration; for the young wife died within the year, and without even leaving to her husband the consolation of a child. But she is not forgotten. Among the fencers of Montpellier,—among the swordsmen who still boast of having studied under Jean-Louis, her memory is held in almost as much veneration as that of her father; and the old men still speak of her with some such chivalrous and admiring respect as might have been paid to Catalina the Nun on her triumphant return from beyond the Andes and the Atlantic—to her native Spain.

AU BONHEUR DES DAMES

In speaking of Emile Zola's last novel, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, we do not refer to the stupid and worthless paraphrase of that work sold under the guise of a translation, but to the French original, which deserves to rank among the most extraordinary productions of the intensely realistic, or so-called Naturalistic school. A curious report had been vented by the press to the effect that Zola, wearied of writing immoral novels, had in *Au Bonheur des Dames* attempted to retrieve his reputation, and create an "honest" romance,—a novel that might be safely laid upon the drawing-room tables of austere pious households. The ludicrousness of the report will appear huge to any person who glances even cursorily through the novel—which is simply a continuation of *Pot-Bouille*. Zola has certainly been more disgusting, more insolently foul in other volumes of the *Rougons-Marquart* series; but he has never been—and it may reasonably be doubted whether he could possibly be—much more immoral.

In addition to the microscopical analysis of familiar sins, numerous hints or suggestions of

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

abnormal iniquity are scattered through the volume. The morality of *Au Bonheur des Dames* differs little from the immorality of *Pot-Bouille*, although the outrage upon humanity perpetrated in the last portion of the latter-mentioned work has no parallel in its successor. Nevertheless the mere absence of stercoraceous nastiness from the new volume cannot suffice to justify its claim to superior morality.

Considered as a work of realism, the book is certainly astounding; and the reader is appalled at the idea of that vast labor which must have been consumed in its preparation. It is the history of a dry goods establishment—one of those monster stores in Paris which surpass the wildest dreams of New York or Chicago merchants, and which are conducted upon a somewhat different principle from the American houses. All the interior life of the great store during the various periods of its existence is exquisitely detailed for the reader; the descriptions by Zola are like the finest and sharpest photographs tinted by master-colorists—like those photographic chefs-d'œuvre sold at fancy prices by Goupil & Co. The multi-colored display in show windows; the arrangement of rich stock in all the various compartments of the building; the piled-up wealth of satins, silks,

AU BONHEUR DES DAMES

velvets, laces; the white universes of dainty linens; the witchery of ready-made feminine apparel; the dressmaking and cloak-departments,—all are reproduced in miniature with wonderful actuality. Let it be remembered that almost every well-known variety of dry goods is described as to texture, color, and effect; that there are separate specifications of stock for winter, spring, summer and fall trade: that the relations between the great manufacturing firms and their customers are accurately set forth,—and one can acquire some idea of the immense preparation such a book must have demanded. Nor must we forget to remark that the daily existence of all the employes,—supervisors, “floor-walkers,” cashiers, salesmen and saleswomen, stock-keepers, porters, etc., etc.,—is described as fully as are the goods upon the shelves,—even more so, indeed; for private gossip or business converse is re-echoed as though *phonographed* with all varieties of intonation and expression. Especially animated are the accounts of petty jealousies and malicious tricks among the employes,—of combinations against new comers and plots to rob an unpopular salesman or saleswoman of opportunities to make a commission. These read as though written by one who had devoted his time to the dry goods trade.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Even the various "schools" of salesmen are described with pet theories of each concerning display of goods, arrangement of show-windows, and so forth. The "shop-lifters" and *kleptomaniacs* are not omitted from the recital; and the scene in which an aristocratic lady-thief is seized and searched with confusing results, deserves the highest praise. There are passages in the work superior in grace and force to much that Zola had before written;—one cannot always be materially realistic; the mere aspect of dainty and womanly things must sometimes thaw the coldest fancy; and the pages describing feminine *lingerie*, trousseaux, etc. (493–495), are almost worthy of Theophile Gautier.

Thus the author envelopes his reader in the life which his characters live,—with its atmosphere of sounds and odors,—with its circumfluence of commercial excitements and jealousies. And as in everyday existence we can judge new acquaintances only by their acts, methods, converse, and that unexplainable repulsion or attraction which is a sort of social instinct-feeling,—so are these characters gradually revealed to us. First, the man or woman is painted for us with the precision of a master-portraitist; then the reader is left to correct or confirm his first impression by the aid of a succession of incidents

AU BONHEUR DES DAMES

which reveal the moral character. The purpose of each motion is made manifest; the secret mental organization of every personage laid bare by a marvelous process of physiological analysis. This philosophic positivism of the author's plan, never weakened since the beginning of his enormous series of romances, appears to remarkable advantage in the present book. He interweaves hypotheses of evolution and natural selection with the whole plot of the novel; and thoughts like these gleam out at every few pages, with splendid phosphorescence:

. . . "It seemed to her that she was again a little child, and was weeping in the end of their garden at Valognes, at seeing the linnets eat the spiders that were themselves wont to eat flies. Was it then, true, that continuous necessity of death, to fatten the substance of the world—that struggle for existence by which creatures perpetually grow upon the charnel-heaps of eternal destruction?" . . . (p. 452.)

The plan of the story may be laid down in a few sentences. Octave Mouret, the dry goods clerk who married his lady employer in the last chapter of *Pot-Bouille* reappears as the proprietor of the great house *Au Bonheur des Dames*,—and as a widower. Denise, an honest country girl seeks and obtains employment in his

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

establishment. She is almost the only really moral person among three thousand employes; and is persecuted by the rest in various brutal or indecent ways. Ultimately the proprietor pays court to her, and finding her above reproach, elevates her by successive degrees to the highest positions in the business. *Au Bonheur des Dames* crushes out of existence all the smaller dry goods houses in its neighborhood; and the receipts rise to a million francs a day. Finally the proprietor marries Denise, because she has proven invulnerable to calumny and impregably fortified against seduction. Upon this framework upward of 520 closely printed pages have been constructed—illustrating the whole interior machinery of the dry goods business; revealing the methods by which large retail houses swallow up the lesser ones; and explaining the cunning devices of advertising, premium distributions, and that luxuriant display by which pretty women are caught in the soft web of their own vanity. The immorality of the story chiefly appears in the scandalous gossip of the establishment, and certain incidents of dissoluteness on the part of employers toward employes. The character of Denise approaches the beautiful more nearly than any other which Zola has drawn; she is as noble and pure a creation as the author is capable of

AU BONHEUR DES DAMES

evolving. And, nevertheless, having created her, he refuses her justice,—as though she were an illegitimate literary offspring. Her career is wholly one of kindness, truth and purity; but Zola, who is no believer in free agency, cannot allow himself to praise her. He analyzes the motives of her honor, just as he has analyzed the motives of wickedness in others;—she is virtuous by necessity rather than choice, by dint of hereditary tendencies rather than by ethical reasoning. When she utters the final “No!” it is followed by reasons which divest it of all majesty. When she loves Mouret she knows him to be a reprobate, a *blasé*; and her admiration must be explained upon ground of the less elevated sort. Here an idealist would have pictured her as discerning in the man something nobler than the open history of his life could suggest, and loving him for something better than a handsome figure and eyes “the color of old gold.” Undoubtedly she did; but Zola does not tell us so. Holding that good and evil have no abstract existence;—that relative virtue and relative vice are alike products of chance combination, accident, or necessity, he never blames, never eulogizes. The bad cannot help being bad; the good must be good in spite of themselves. Irrefutable this philosophy may be; but the philosopher-novelist,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

who affects to consider questions of *influence* so broadly and dispassionately, would seem to have entirely forgotten his own ability to influence the minds of many millions of readers in a better manner than he has been doing; and his colossal work proves in the most terrible and exhaustive manner, how much the French mind of the nineteenth century needs the invigorating and purifying force of that idealism which the Zolaïtes would banish from the world.

L'ŒUVRE

Zola's last work,—“*L'Œuvre*,” should give the leaders of the present Literary discussion upon Realism and Idealism something new to think about. While,—judging from the criticisms which the author puts into the mouths of his characters in the closing pages,—the book would seem to contain a colossal satire on artistic idealism, it is actually nothing more than a splendid analytic study of peculiar hallucinations; and it would be illogical in the extreme to make its apparent moral application to the ambitions of idealism in general. An artist of admirable talent has two affections—the one a beautiful and loving “Woman of Flesh,” as Zola calls her in contradistinction to the other, a woman of canvas and paint. He exhausts his art, his fortune, and his health, in efforts to portray the latter with the aid of the former as a model. All his toil is vain;—he creates only a monster! The impossibility of realizing his conception preys upon him until the painted figure seems to live a phantom life and to menace him with terrors like those depicted in the story of *Frankenstein*. The real woman,—the Woman of Flesh,—perceives the

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

peril, strives to save the painter;—she has youth, grace, wit, beauty; she uses all her arts, all her gifts, to rescue him from the spectre. For a brief moment she triumphs; but he only leaves her embrace to hang himself before the hideous creation upon which he has wasted his life in vain.

And what was this chimera that haunted and strangled the artist? He wished to paint flesh. He actually sought to paint a woman formed out of flowers, precious stones and precious metals,—snow and fire, sky-blue and sun-gold: an intermingling of Undine, fairy, and flame-spirit, —something like those maids of mystic Hindoo romance who were created out of jewels and flowers to tempt and destroy the enemies of Brahma. Such was the nightmare finally begotten by the artist's persistent search after the impossible. He wished only to paint the supremely real; and this supreme realism itself became an idealism wilder than any mythological madness. Although custom has to some extent sanctioned the use of the verb "create" in speaking of the productions of art, the artist is in truth not only powerless to create, but powerless even to imitate nature. Who can paint a beam of sunlight,—the translucid green of foliage against a bright sky,—the warmth of flesh, or the flash-

L'ŒUVRE

ing of water? Even were the science of photography so developed as to realize that dream of the future,—the photographing and fixing of colors, still we would not thus obtain nature's own effects, but only ghosts of them. Never can human art rival nature's sweetness and brightness until man is able, by the utterance of a fiat, to create light. This truth Realism knows:—what it does not know is the limit of its own artistic power, and in attempting to expand those limits it may transform itself into an Idealism wilder than aught which the old Romantic school could ever have been charged with.

Zola's own work reveals a peculiar transmutation. His method has markedly changed;—he has risen above his own theories, and abandoned mere grossness for something which, if not the highest art, may be at least the shadow of a superlative art to come. His previous volume *Germinal* was a grim and mighty poem,—rude terrible but epically imposing. His *L'Œuvre* is certainly equally great, and still more forcibly illustrates the present bent of his genius. He has been obliged, in the very course of realistic study which he laid out for himself, while preparing the enormous material of his work, to recognize the existence of the Ideal as a motive for human conduct,—the truth of Napoleon's

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

assertion "that Imagination rules the world." And whether considered objectively or subjectively, idealism must have its place in the future, and its influence upon the future progress of art and thought. The probabilities are that Zola and his school,—despite the intense brutality of their first recoil from Romanticism, and despite all the abominations for which the Naturalistic philosophy offered so miserable an excuse,—have really laid the foundations of a magnificent art which will only be developed after them, but which will surpass the best of what was done before them. They have unconsciously revealed to the world the secret of a New Idealism.

A NEW ROMANTIC

The French iron-clad *Atalante*, now stationed at the mouth of the Hué River in Tonquin, has on board one of the most remarkable novelists living,—so remarkable indeed that he stands entirely alone as the founder of a new school, and the only pioneer in a new field of fiction. He has no rivals,—for there are perhaps no other great writers living, who have had or could have similar opportunities for romantic study; and there is probably no member of his own profession possessing either the talent or scholarship requisite to use such material, both artistically and scientifically, as he has done. For this young novelist is a novelist only by inclination;—he writes during the intervals of leisure allowed him by his duties as a naval officer,—as lieutenant of the *Atalante*. Some of his most finished literary work appears to have been done on board ship. He has probably been at sea most of his life; yet his romances exhibit a scholarship by no means common, much scientific study, a thorough familiarity with art-principles, and a supple power in the use of the French language, which some of the best French critics justly speak of as magistral and startling.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

In the multitude of English and American reviews of Recent French Literature, which have appeared during the last five years, it is doubtful whether any attention has been paid to him. This is probably because he has only acquired celebrity in his own country since 1881; his talent, strangely brilliant as it is, could not obtain foreign recognition so soon. Yet to those who know his books, it is almost exasperating to find in every fresh review of recent French literature, the most elaborate notices of fourth-rate *feuilletonistes*, and not a syllable about one who ranks in some respects higher than Gustave Flaubert, and whose work contains beauties of color comparable to the rich word-painting of Gautier. No other writer has really trodden upon his domain; he has cultivated a virgin soil, and invented for its cultivation a style so peculiarly his own, that it is only susceptible of comparison with other styles according to the force of the impression it produces.

In 1879 his first romance appeared. It was a modest-looking book with a pale-blue paper cover, which was adorned with a vignette,—the face of a Turkish girl, dimly visible through a veil. The novel was issued by Calman Levy, one of the shrewdest publishers in Paris, who

A NEW ROMANTIC

probably perceived in this first effort, the surprising ability of the writer. The title-page bore the words "*AZIYADÉ—Extracts from the Notes and Letters of an English Naval Lieutenant who entered the Turkish Service 10th May, 1876, and was killed under the walls of Kars, Oct. 27, 1877.*" The name was given as "Pierre Loti"; and it was not until about five months ago that the Paris journals unmasked the incognito, and informed the public that "Pierre Loti" was the nom-de-plume of a young Breton naval lieutenant, Lucien Viaud, of the *Atalante*.

Aziyadé was the history of an amour between a European officer and the inmate of a Constantinople harem,—a theme that might not seem particularly novel. But the whole treatment of the episode was supremely original, and the vividness of the Oriental pictures surprising. There were evidences of remarkable personal research in almost every page—delightful sketches of Turkish interiors,—curious notes of Oriental superstition and customs,—microscopic details concerning things no other European had mentioned,—portraits of *hamals*, interpreters, dervishes, boatmen of the Golden Horn,—singular conversations in Turkish and French,—above all such painting of skies and clouds and shadows and colors—as revealed the feeling of a

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

master-artist. Much pathos and passion also—perhaps too much, enough to reveal the heart of a very young man, urged rather by an irresistible desire of self-expansion than by the desire to become known. “Aziyadé” proved, for the time being, a mediocre success financially; but its merits were sufficiently recognized to encourage Levy next year to publish a far more remarkable novel by the same author,—*Le Mariage de Loti*, dedicated to Sarah Bernhardt, with an apology for the youth of the writer, and bearing on its title-page a strange proverb in the Tahitian language.

The charm of this book is simply inexpressible; its beauty is as essentially exotic as the scenes which it paints,—but its fancies are replete with that inimitable, unutterable weirdness which characterizes the Breton mind; and Lucien Viaud is of Brittany! Only Doré could have illustrated the strange lights and shadows of the narrative. The scenes are laid in Polynesia—“latitude 16° south, longitude 154° west”; and the perusal of all accounts of voyages made to such regions could not give so vivid an idea of those landscapes “never created for European eyes to see, for European imagination to dwell upon.” The romance is rich in linguistic curiosities also; Loti has chosen with admirable art the

A NEW ROMANTIC

most singular words in the language of the islands, and expounded their astonishing meanings; he has published also a collection of pathetic and beautiful letters in the dialect of Tahiti. These letters seem authentic; and indeed the whole story has a verisimilitude which is nothing short of painful. The last chapter is not only an agony of pathos, but an agony made awful by contrasts so weird and supernatural fancies so ghostly that no idea could be formed of it by those who have not read the book. It creates an impression not to be forgotten in a lifetime:—nothing like it has been written by any other. The vision of the shadowy island with its phantom-palms,—the spectral ship bearing the dreamer noiselessly over a silent sea,—the ghostly sun,—the dead face that laughs with the laugh of a skull,—would form of themselves one of the most eldritch pictures conceived by a modern brain; but all this anguish of the fancy is suddenly intensified almost to the point of torture by the memory of the letter:—*O my dear little friend, O my perfumed flower of evening, great is the pain in my heart because I cannot see thee!—O my star of the morning, mine eyes melt in tears at the thought thou will never return. . . .*

This exquisite romance succeeded, created a well deserved artistic sensation, sold largely in

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

spite of the rage then prevailing for naturalistic literature. And Loti is the most romantic of Romantics; he has shown that true art can prevail in despite of naturalistic innovations.

Not less remarkable was his next effort, published in 1881,—*Le Roman d'un Spahi*, many pages of which were translated for this paper.* Such luminous pictures of Africa,—such strange and startling colors, as of desert sunsets,—such monstrous landscapes and fantastic incidents as he paints in this book must have been studied on the spot. In fact, Viaud was not only long in Senegal, but accompanied military expeditions against the negro kings of the unknown interior. He again displays in this sinister romance his capacity for curious linguistic study; and exhibits with not less surprising power the same old Breton weirdness of fancy, the same magic of pathos.

This year two new works by Loti have appeared; and with each fresh appearance the marvelous art of the writer appears to greater advantage. The first of his works published in 1883, under the title *Fleurs d'Ennui*, is a charming collection of little novelettes and sketches, laid in Algeria, in China, in Montenegro and in

*The translation was made by Hearn himself for the *Times-Democrat*.—*The Editor*.

A NEW ROMANTIC

Guyana. No porcelain painting could be more exquisite and more brightly colored than these studies. They are announced as the joint work of Loti and a friend; and this seems probable, as there are some differences of style; but the collaboration of "Plunkett" cannot have been very extensive. The second novel is not yet completed. It is being published as a serial in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*; and has excited already universal surprise and praise. It is entitled *Mon Frere Yves*, and describes the strangest incidents of a sailor's career in the strangest parts of the world.

Viaud is described as a fair-haired, blue-eyed, and rather shy young person, who has been quite astonished at his recent successes, and almost unaware of his own genius. When questioned concerning his ideas about novel-writing he answered that he had never tried to describe anything which he had not seen, and that he only tried to convey his own impressions of his own experiences as vividly as possible.

Probably he will have no successor in his special quality of exotic novelist; for such experiences as he describes are possible only to those who lead a seafaring life. But his style will certainly be studied and imitated by a new

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

school of romantic writers, and will endure when the works of the Naturalists will survive only as morbid curiosities. This little review of his work may, we hope, excite attention to it among American students of French literature; for he is certainly destined to shine as a great light in the modern world of fiction, unless carried off prematurely by some marine disaster or mishap of war. In his last book a certain strange horror of death is manifested—such a horror as only those can know the fullness of who have beheld the wonders of the most wonderful lands, the most marvelous miracles of nature. To the deep thinker, so intimately and awfully are Life and Death connected, that where he beholds the mightiest manifestations of the evolution of being, there also is he most poignantly reminded of the inevitable and universal law of ultimate dissolution.

THE MOST ORIGINAL OF MODERN NOVELISTS: PIERRE LOTI

The public recognition of Pierre Loti as the most original of modern French writers was predicted in these columns some years ago, at the time when his second wonderful novel, *Le Roman d'un Spahi* appeared like a revelation of literary possibilities previously undreamed-of. Loti has not yet, indeed, obtained by common acknowledgment, the peerless place to which he is justly entitled; but the foreign reviews are already devoting articles to his books couched in terms of unqualified admiration, and the period of his triumph is not very far off. This is a rapid literary success, indeed, for a young man of thirty-four, whose first attempt at romance was made at twenty-six; but the truth appears to be that in proportion to the genius of the writer, the recognition has come slowly,—for such work is too splendid in artistic power to be readily appreciated by the masses. It was Albert Delpit who first boldly averred in French print that Loti was a glory to France, and that in certain respects the beauty of his creations had neither parallel nor precedent. Loti does not, however, at present

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

need a literary champion in his own country; he has at last compelled such attention by mere force of talent that he can obtain extraordinary prices for the least trifle he writes. To the readers of the great Paris magazines a sketch by Loti is a delicious treat, and such select audiences comprise the refined minds of the entire civilized world;—for the *Nouvelle Revue*, or the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, may be found in every city where the French language is understood by an appreciable percentage of the population. Thus Loti probably is admired by a larger number of readers in the colonies and in other countries than even at home, where he enjoys the friendship of Alphonse Daudet and other celebrities.

In addition to many pleasing reviews of his work in various periodicals, we find also some novel and unusually interesting notes upon the personal history and character of the novelist in a recent issue of the *Revue Politique et Littéraire*. Pierre Loti, whose real name is Julian Viaud, was born at Rochefort-sur-mer in 1850, and belongs to an old Huguenot family, not without other modern representatives in literature; for Madame Nelly-Lientier, an aunt of the young lieutenant, has written several good novels. The family was not without ample means, and Loti, together with an elder brother, had the

PIERRE LOTI

advantages of scientific education, and adopted by preferment a naval career. Educational training of the highest character, developed in Loti's mind the blossoms of very extraordinary natural gifts; for in addition to his talent as a writer he is an artist of no mean order with pencil and with brush, and a musician!—proof of which latter talent he recently gave by composing the overture of an opera drawn from his *Mariage de Loti*. No doubt he found a theme for his work in some charming reminiscence of Polynesian music. In 1869 Loti visited Brazil and the United States; in 1870 his vessel cruised in the North Sea and the Baltic; in 1871 he visited Senegal,—to leave it again for Brazil, La Plata, Patagonia, Chili and Peru. In 1872 he was sent to the Pacific where he visited the Marquesas and Sandwich Islands, and returned to France by way of California. The years 1873 and 1874 were spent in Senegal and Guinea; 1876 and '77 in the Orient, at Salonica and Stamboul. In 1878–9 he was cruising along the Norman and Breton coasts. He left for Algeria and Tunis in 1880, visited that eastern part of Europe,—Cattaro, Ragusa, and Montenegro,—of which he has given such charming reminiscences in *Fleurs d'ennui*; and was sent to Annam and Tonkin in 1883, to be recalled on account of

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

those famous letters to the *Figaro*, which created such a sensation in Europe, and impelled Albert Delpit to a generous defense of the writer.

It will be seen that Loti has traveled a great deal,—has enjoyed extraordinary chances of obtaining inspiration of a special kind. Opportunity, however, certainly never made him what he is. He has traveled only in countries where other children of European civilization traveled and dwelt and observed and thought and wrote before him,—yet he has surpassed them all in the difficult art of recording and analyzing new impressions, of preserving them with the accuracy and brightness that only the yet-undiscovered art of color-photography might give, and of perfuming each scene with the strange exotic odors belonging to the original. He is perhaps the only living writer combining the artistic perception of a painter and musician with the scientific knowledge of a nineteenth-century scholar, who availed himself fully of the magnificent inspirations which a naval career now offers to the man who comprehends the beauty and feels the mysterious magic of nature. It is interesting, indeed, therefore, to discover the method of literary workmanship followed by such a master.

Pierre Loti wrote his first book almost without

PIERRE LOTI

intending to attempt authorship. On visiting a new country he always used to take notes of every fresh and powerful impression—a landscape,—a sunset-blaze,—a peculiar atmosphere,—a singular and typical face,—a moral trait,—an architectural eccentricity,—a bit of picturesqueness in costume,—a barbaric strain of music,—using his artistic knowledge of color or music with technicological accuracy. Nor did such exquisite notework as this alone satisfy him; for mere description of external objects alone forms but a small part of the charm of his books;—he subjoined notes of the thoughts and fancies also which such impressions of sight, sound, or smell produced in the mind; and thus his work is as much introspective as it is retrospective. Loti has never made any secret of his literary method; for his art cannot be limited merely by pursuing his plan. To attempt imitation upon such indications were as foolish as to eat opium immediately after a first perusal of De Quincey, in the belief that the experiences of that wonderful thinker depended upon the influence of the drug. Thousands who have read the Confession, and imitated the vice of its author, have been painfully surprised to find that by thus disordering their ideas of time and space, no panoramic visions of Egyptian monstrosities or Indian

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

enormities were unrolled before them. It would be better for such to ask themselves whether their ideas of space and time are sufficiently cultivated by study to produce interesting phenomena of any sort under artificial stimulus; and unless the would-be imitator of Loti possess the genius of Loti, he will achieve nothing by seeking the same sources of inspiration.

Preserving his impressions in this way, Loti has given us a series of exotic word-paintings unlike anything else ever written. He has described for us the Polynesian archipelagoes, with delicious notes of an ethnographic and linguistic character, in *Le Mariage de Loti*. He has painted the antique Arabian quarter of Algiers—(now almost obliterated)—in two charming stories: *Suleima*, and *Les Trois Dames de la Casbah*. A picture of Montenegro and its people, of wonderful pathos and originality, is the little novellette *Pasquala Ivanovitch*,—which with the two last-named stories are contained in *Fleurs d'ennui*, as are also reminiscences of the Guinea Coast, of South America, and a series of infinitely delicate miniature paintings of Chinese life, which have the odd brilliancy of lacquer and the fantastic coloration of Oriental pottery-designs. Constantinople and the romantic Golden Horn have never been portrayed with

PIERRE LOTI

such elegance of tinted words as in *Aziyadé*, the story of Loti's Circassian sweetheart. Most strangely brilliant of all, most intoxicatingly novel, are the magical landscape views of Africa and the verbal photographs of black life in *Le Roman d'un Spahi*. Here we find the art of the writer allied with the knowledge of the botanist, the geologist, the naturalist, the anthropologist. If Loti has not mastered the methods of these sciences, he has at least mastered their greatest modern results. Finally in *Mon Frere Yves*, we find, besides admirable accounts of the Breton coast, some wondrous drawings of Valparaiso and of Oriental localities,—including a very singular account of a bayadere-dance. The book now in course of preparation—parts of which have been already published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* promises to contain some equally remarkable pen-paintings of Tonkin and the Tonkinese. Loti has still far from exhausted his Oriental experiences, however; and we may sooner or later hope to see him write of Japan, India, Cambodia—a matchless source of inspiration for an archæological artist—South Africa, Australia, and Arabia. His pages teach one more about foreign countries than many ponderous and learned volumes of travel could ever do. Such work as this must endure and become classical.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

The critic in *La Revue Politique et Littéraire* tells us of a few other interesting facts not to be passed over in silence. For example, Loti has never described anything which he has not actually seen—none of his composition is purely “closet-work.” All the incidents of the *Roman d'un Spahi* are strictly true, with the solitary exception that Jean Peyral (who was Loti's orderly in Senegal) did not die on the battlefield, but returned to France and married his sweetheart. Still, the description of the death-struggle is true to life; for the author was present when a company of Spahis were surprised by negroes in ambush, and he beheld such a tragedy as he described. We also learn that the “Roueri” of *Le Mariage de Loti* is the author's own brother. But who is Plunkett?

PLOT-FORMATION IN MODERN NOVELS

In the world's great literary centre,—Paris,—something like a discussion is now going on regarding the mechanism of novels. Since the magnificent apparition of Flaubert, certain canons long-established by custom have been more and more neglected; and among those who override the old formalities of literary workmanship are numbered some of the most influential and successful of modern French authors. According to all traditions of the elder schools of fiction-writers, a perfect novel must have a beginning, a middle and an end,—must be perfectly harmonious in all its parts,—must have each chapter so interlinked with another that none could be displaced or suppressed, or so much as modified, without seriously effecting the beauty and symmetry of the whole. The greatest novels of all modern literature had, until recently, been constructed more or less in obedience to these ideas: they had a sculpturesque symmetry and polish,—a rounded completeness that caressed the imagination, just as the bland lines of a statue charm the vision. Flaubert and his

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

followers violated these ideas. They commonly suppressed laborious introductions, ignored explanations, and compelled their readers to plunge at once into the most intense action of an episode. There was no circumlocution in their method,—no preliminary tantalizing: just one strong shock of interest was what they sought to excite. Their style and plan pleased by reason of its novelty and its intensity;—they invariably sought for strong effects, violent action. Nervous excitement was frequently their aim; and whatever produces nervous excitement upon the reading public seems to please. In our day the most daring and successful writer of this sort is Guy de Maupassant.

Julian Viaud (Pierre Loti) although pursuing a different motive and a different literary course, has also been freely criticized for his heterodoxy on the subject of classical form. His work is intensely subjective as Maupassant's is objective; but the two young writers coincide in their indifference to old-fashioned law and orderly arrangement. Both *suggest* novels rather than write them,—by confining themselves to the production of powerful detached episodes, which Maupassant relates with the impersonal tone of a simple observer,—Viaud with the strong sympathetic utterance of a participant. In spite of

PLOT-FORMATION

his eccentricities, Viaud has won academic honors; and Maupassant, notwithstanding his insubordination to disciplinary rules of authorship, remains the acknowledged prince of objective realism in literature. The question is whether the example of literary independence set by such authors is something to be praised or blamed; and this question is complicated by the discovery that among those Russian writers, who now exert so broad an influence, some of the most impressive have been guilty of similar heresies.

Viaud appears to be in this respect an extremist, and he has never been unfavorably criticized upon any other grounds. His work always consists of a series of perfect little pictures or impressions,—each relating to the other, yet so independently complete that it might be transposed, removed, shifted at will. There are blank spaces between each,—left for the imagination to fill up. The history of a life is neither compressed nor expanded; it is suggested by a faithful depiction of separate incidents. That such work may be at once perfectly truthful and exquisite is undeniable; but according to Sarcey and other critics it is not framed in accordance with artistic law. One might ask the critic whether such “artistic law” is altogether artistic!

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

These luminous pages of Loti's are actual glimpses of works and days;—men and things come and go before the reader's eyes as they do in the light of the sun. So it is in real life! We see or hear other faces or voices at intervals only; and guess the incidents of the invisible intervals from the incidents of the visible moment. We do not need to see a friend or an enemy daily in order to discern his relation to ourselves;—we study him by occasions. Why should authors not do likewise in their records of life? Why should they, like poets, be bound by conventionalism of form? The so-called symmetry demanded by the old-school critics has no existence in the world. There is rhythm, but not of measure,—harmony, but not of incident. All individual free lives are irregular as weather,—as changes of temperature,—as the ever-varying character of seasons. And in the natural progression of things, conventional restrictions upon fiction must pass away, just as the necessity for a complicated plot has already passed. The very expansion of language has helped to bring this about; for there is no thought so subtle, no idea so vaporous, that it may not now be expressed; and the realities of mental life are stranger and of larger interest than any dream of fiction. The future is to

PLOT-FORMATION

realism;—idealism will endure only in its truest form as a motive of action, an inseparable part of human thought. Long before the realistic school had fairly conquered a place for itself, this tendency had been noticed (in 1867) by the great organizing intellect of Herbert Spencer, who, speaking of evolution in esthetic art, observed:

—“Along with social advance, there has been a progressive diminution of unnaturalness—an approach to truth of representation. And now, novels and plays are applauded in proportion to the fidelity with which they exhibit individual characters:—improbabilities, like the impossibilities which preceded them, are disallowed; and there is even an incipient abandonment of those elaborate plots which life rarely, if ever furnishes.” . . .*

THE NATION ON LOTI

It is pleasant to hear so concise, severe, and just a critic as the *New York Nation*, speak with actual enthusiasm of the works of Pierre Loti, which appear to have been submitted to its reviewer for the first time. Speaking of the *Mariage de Loti*, the reviewer calls it "a wonderful poem, in a language as simple and natural as prose, as picturesque and vivid as verse," and asks,—"*what book in any language can be thought of to compare with this strange Senegambian idyl*"—referring to the *Roman d'un Spahi*. Then follows an effort,—a very clever effort, to discover the mystery of this strange power, totally unlike the force of other writers, who with infinitely greater labor have achieved far less impressive results. The *Nation* suggests that Loti's influence is due to a combination of causes of which the principal are, that he is still very young; that he has not read enough to be too much influenced by literary conventionalities; and, finally, that he has made his books from notes of impressions taken on the spot, and developed while still vivid and fresh.

All these conditions might partially account

THE NATION ON LOTI

for the charm of Loti's pages, but only very partially. That he is young is, of course, an indispensable condition to the correct delineation of feelings which are possible only to youth; but there are multitudes of young writers of conceded talent who have never been able to express what Loti expresses;—there have been poets of acknowledged genius who have produced nothing to compare with *Le Mariage de Loti*. How much he has read it is rather difficult to judge from his books, which do not depend upon literary scholarship for their beauty; but the graduate of a university, a lieutenant in the French navy, must be an educated man; and one fact discernible from his work, is that he has been well-schooled in modern science and philosophy. With these, he can afford to leave a vast mass of light literature unread,—that literature through which many ordinary minds obtain, in a vague way, conceptions of what the practical scientist must know positively. As the *Atlantic* pointed out years ago in an admirable paper, it is rather to be desired that an author should not be a scholar,—as certain preliminaries to scholarship are apt to injure creative power; indeed very successful novelists of modern days could be classed among scholars, properly speaking. This only renders Loti's work all the more remarkable,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

without accounting for it,—since neither among those who have not read much, nor among those who have not been influenced by reading a great deal, can a perfect example of similar creative power be found. One need not look for it among English or French prose writers;—the man who most nearly approaches Loti in the art of communicating impressions is a poet,—that wonderful Provençal singer Mistral, whose verse has already been indifferently translated into a dozen colder and paler-colored tongues. In both Mistral and Loti the impressive quality is something absolutely primitive in its force and freshness;—both are souls which comprehend nature like the ancient Finnish singers, or the pre-Islamic Arabians; nevertheless the creative art of each is broad with all the breadth of modernity. In neither case could skill in taking notes explain the sympathetic production;—this is an age of note-taking; every writer takes notes; and the most remarkable note-book-user in the world is . . . Emile Zola!

In another part of the paper will be found a few pages of Loti,* illustrating that extraordinary capacity which puzzles the *Nation*, and which it cannot explain. Here let us cite a few more paragraphs from his last sketches. After

* The translation as used was made by Hearn.—*The Editor*.

THE NATION ON LOTI

describing the French factory building at Obock, the Governor's residence, etc., he pictures the native quarter as seen from a distance for the first time:—

—“A little village, an African hamlet comes after:— it is of the same reddish gray as the ground and the sands; it has been calcined by the same sun. Its huts of matted straw, very low, look like the nests of animals. Far off, one can see there, moving about, like strange puppets, four or five personages in very showy costumes, —robes of orange color, red, or white, from which long black arms protrude;—and others, entirely naked, with the silhouettes of apes.” . . .

Thus, in a very few lines, we obtain such a perfect view as might be obtained through a marine glass; one could recognize the place on sight. In the village, on shore, however, we must walk about with the writer to see:—

—“All along the street there are nothing but little *cafés*. Little stalls. Under each straw-structure, something is being drunk or traded in. And the whole has a sort of improvised air, the air of a caravansary, of the beginning of an African market.

“*Cafés à l'Arabe*, where one drinks out of very little cups brought from Aden, while smoking very big brazen narghilahs of monumental size,—where one eats pink watermelons and bits of sugar-cane.”

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

"Shops in extreme miniature, whose whole stock and display are laid on a little table constructed with pigeon-holes in the top:—a little rice in one compartment, a little salt in another, a little cinnamon, a little saffron, a little ginger;—and then, little heaps of queer grain, and roots of a totally unknown kind. And the same merchant also deals in cotton turbans, costumes of the Egyptian fashion, and Ethiopian *pagnes* (body garments of cotton).

"Buyers and sellers, about two hundred persons at most, belong to all sorts of races. Negroes, very black, frizzly and shining, with torsos nude, and superb in their attitudes. Arabs with great painted eyes,—dressed in white, bright-green, or golden yellow. Tawny men, long and slender,—stork-necked, with goat-like profiles, who wear long hair dyed a reddish white that contrasts with the color of their shoulders like a merino-fleece upon bronze. Dankalis wearing necklaces of shells. And two or three wandering Malabars, bringing with them into this medley a souvenir of near India." . . .

So he takes the reader through the African village with him; points out the principal singularities, makes us watch the queer games of dominoes and cards that are being played;—startles us by calling attention to certain players, —brown men with what look like plaster moulds on their heads,—the limey mixture used for dyeing it white or yellow, and which must be

THE NATION ON LOTI

washed off next day. Always these things are recounted very briefly, yet with consummate strength of description.

Loti evidently relies on something more than those gratifying conditions and surroundings by which the *Nation* would partly account for his success;—we might venture to suggest two peculiarities of character, which are very seldom combined in the same person: an intensely sympathetic nature and an extremely rapid and subtle faculty of observation. That observation is a faculty, seldom cultivated to its full capacity, anyone can be convinced of by a little thought upon the subject. It is not necessarily the man with the largest range of vision who sees the most; in every crowd of a dozen sharp-sighted persons there will always be found one who perceives more than his companions, who notes more. Popular phraseology makes the distinction between a keen eye and a quick eye; the possession of the former does not involve the special exercise of any mental faculty; but the possession of the latter *implies* a faculty, a marked activity of certain mental functions. After all, however, the question resolves itself into one of temperament;—differences of power among authors are largely due to differences of mental and nervous organization; the only pos-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

sible explanation of the secret of the writer under discussion, would have to be physiological; and behind the physiology of the Mind the mystery of the Infinite lies.

THE RELIGION OF SUFFERING

The phrase is borrowed from Bourget's last masterpiece *Crime d'Amour*, in which he has not, perhaps, surpassed his previous work *Cruelle Enigme*, but has certainly paralleled it. The story is altogether more painfully revolting,—so revolting, in fact, that the reader has almost reached the close before he suspects that the novelist can even attempt to redeem himself by any moral effort above the commonplace. Then, however, comes the surprise,—a surprise unequalled in recent French fiction. The book is absolutely purified by its termination,—one of the most powerfully touching and truthful studies of human nature ever conceived,—a splendid and satisfactory apology for all that preceded it. The story is a sermon,—a magnificent sermon; and one likely to produce infinitely more good than all the pseudo-ethical fiction ever written to fill “a want.” It is simply the history of a moral change effected in the person of a corrupt man through the spectacle of a woman's ruin accomplished by himself.

The modern skepticism personified by the chief character of the novel, is essentially pessi-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

mistic;—it is less of an anti-religious unbelief than of a hopeless doubting in human nature. When a man begins to doubt the existence of honor, the existence of friendship, the existence of duty, the existence of affection, then the world of course becomes hideous to him. Such a black realm seems to be the world of those pessimists of romance to-day, who find consolation in the publication of poems entitled *Blasphèmes*, and, as a justly-satirical critic observes, utter imprecations and absurdly shake their fists at that heaven which they declare to be empty. The course of pessimism in a society must, however, resemble in some sort the course of pessimism in the individual;—the reaction is certain to come, sooner or later! After having carried doubt to those extremes of negation in which doubts themselves become dogmas, the unbeliever possessing any remnant of altruism is apt to encounter some terrible experience which reveals to him unmistakably and unmercifully that his revolt against Nature is vain, and that Nature possesses powers of punishment fully capable of forcing the most obdurate mutineers to return to her allegiance. Then the new *Credo* is learned;—it may not be quite the same as the old; its forms of expression may be more mysterious; its principles may be more difficult to define, but its dogmas, written in

RELIGION OF SUFFERING

blood, are inculcated by a teacher who never fails in her work and once memorized, they will be forever remembered. He who trains his mind to perceive the vast evil of human nature must also learn to know the vast goodness in human nature; but after having learned the former the school of pleasure, he must learn the latter in the school of pain. When Nature maketh the crooked way straight, she is less kindly than the surgeon,—she uses no anæsthetics!

The *blasé* of Bourget's novel receives the lesson through a woman;—but such a lesson may be given in a hundred ways. It must be taken for granted that the man is not thoroughly, criminal by nature; for there are characters of unimpressionable depravity. But these belong—whether professedly or secretly—to the criminal classes proper; and outside of such classes, there are few human beings who can remain forever systematically untruthful to themselves. The sense of altruism which enables the million beggars of the world to live,—which establishes hospitals and asylums,—which crystallizes charitable associations,—which continually increases in strength with the development of civilization,—cannot be eradicated by any self-imposed system of false philosophy; and no citing of

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

monstrous exceptions contradicts the general law. What a man may not be able to obtain from Reason and what he refuses to receive from theological dogma, may be ultimately forced upon him by the overmastering sentiment of pity,—or what Bourget eloquently calls “that Virtue of Charity, which dispenses with all logical demonstrations and all revelations,—unless it be, indeed, itself the supreme and eternal revelation.” The beauty of the French writer’s study is not impaired by the fact that it seems to reveal the influence of Russian thought, and that its closing pages recalls Dostoievsky’s picture of the unhappy Raskolnikoff, crying out as he kisses the feet of the young outcast: “*It is not before thee that I prostrate myself;—it is to all the suffering of humanity!*” . . .

There is a tendency to-day to develop this very theme to the uttermost; and the tendency is a beneficent one. It promises to give the century a species of lay-religious literature that would not fail to have even a larger influence than Henry Kingsley’s apostolate of “muscular Christianity,” for its idealism would reach minds inaccessible to the peculiarly English stimulus of that noble and manly writer. It would aid to create a strong and healthy sense of duty,—the

RELIGION OF SUFFERING

duty to oneself of doing good for the sake of good; or, to give the idea in its most egotistic form, for the moral gratification acquired by kindly action.

SOME CURIOUS MEMOIRS

At a time when the book market is being glutted with Memoirs of all qualities and kinds, the one particular volume able to absorb attention in French literary circles, to the exclusion of many others, ought to be something very unique indeed. So it is. The first volume (there are to be three) of the *Journal des Goncourt* forms perhaps the most extraordinary diary ever given to any public. Imagine two men, thorough realists as to form, though not always artists as to spirit, two brother novelists who made a habit of chronicling from day to day, as exactly as possible, every impression of an odd, curious, or violent description experienced by them. The result, even if confined to such limits as English or American good taste might expect, would be uncommonly interesting. But these two realists, —confined in their enterprise by no laws, literary or otherwise, of any sort,—have given us a hodge-podge of startling notes on all conceivable topics, without any arrangement beyond such a chronological one as must necessarily be almost meaningless to any but themselves. For continuous reading, the book at first seems the reverse

SOME CURIOUS MEMOIRS

of inviting;—it is only the very elaborate index which encourages even a casual examination of it. Then, however, comes the revelation of an extraordinary literary mosaic, painfully elaborated as to conception and style,—every line or fragment of a line being as carefully wrought as possible. Read at intervals of leisure, page by page, the work is more than a surprise; it is an instruction concerning not only those two lives of which it forms the private record, but also the life and the thought of Paris between 1851 and 1861. In all this it is astonishingly precise,—a series of verbal photographs, with aphorisms, apothegms, complaints, criticisms, and ironies thrown in between. Yet, after all, the impression the book leaves is the reverse of pleasant. The utter absence of anything like enthusiasm, sympathy or personal admiration is remarkable, and might partly account for the general disagreeableness of the book's tone. One must indeed read many such books in order to appreciate fully how much we owe to sympathetic feeling for the charm of all our most popular and successful books. An author may be magnificently impersonal, like a Tourgueneff or a Maupassant, and never be disagreeable. But no author can write a work, no matter how clever a stylist, totally void of all idealistic feeling and en-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

thusiasm, without becoming disagreeable; for such very absence of sentiment constitutes an offensive intrusion of self. Such a nature must be more or less repellant by reason of excessive egotisms. It is not easy to conceive that the obvious indifference of a man who has no sincere admiration for anything is due to other cause than an over-exalted idea of himself, or an ignorant incapacity to comprehend others. There is only one remarkable approach to an expression of admiration in this whole volume; and in fact, one of the brothers actually declares that he *used* to have enthusiasms and admirations and friendships, but that he subsequently “learned by experience they were not all “worth a kick.” After such a statement the following note in the diary surprises the reader:—

—“At the Glyptothek. . . . The Barberini Faun. The most admirable rendering in marble, by the statuary’s art, of a humanity contemporary with the Gods. That gracious head thrown back by sleep upon the pillowing arm,—the still shadow of those closed eyes,—the smile of that mouth from which a breath seems to come,—the softness and tenderness of those cheeks rounded by repose: this is the tranquil and beautiful slumber of humanity, fresh from the hands of the Creator. Such, I think to myself, must have been the

SOME CURIOUS MEMOIRS

sleep of Adam, on that night in which a companion was given unto him.”—P. 341.

This sentiment certainly much resembles some of the things which are “not worth a kick,”—and might therefore have been written in a moment of uncommon nervous exaltation. The following notes, fair samples of the character of several hundred others, reveal the general tone of the book much more truthfully:—

—“In the talent of certain men there is a certain continuity and equality of production which sometimes bores me. They no longer seem to me to write, but to *flow*. They are like the fountains of wine of the public festivals,—pouring out metaphors for the people.” ●

—“In the Nude, whether painted, sculptured, or written, some people see only the line of beauty. Others always see the skin of woman and its temptation. For some people, there is something of Deveria even in the Venus of Milo.”

—“They were talking in a certain café about a well-known journalist, and some one,—I don’t know who,—related that just so soon as anybody became a little intimate with him, he would put his name down in a book,—a regular bank-book,—with the credit on one side and the debit on the other. Then at the first favor which he did for him, he would put so much down to the Dr. side; and if the other returned the favor, he put so much down on the Cr. side; balancing the account

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

regularly every month, so as to be sure that his friendship always brought him in something considerable."

—"One of the corruptions of old civilizations is that which impels men to find no pleasure except in the work of Man, and to be bored to death by the works of God."

And so the patchwork proceeds,—a bit of cynical realism alternating with an aphorism,—anecdotes succeeded by sarcastic commentaries on ambitions, exaltations, glory, fame, vice, faith, etc. The most valuable portion of the anecdotes are, of course, those relating to great literary celebrities,—Hugo, Gautier, Baudelaire, Flaubert; but the same lack of all literary sympathy or altruistic sensitiveness, is perpetually apparent: one has the feeling of being introduced into very agreeable society by excessively selfish and cynical people.

The keynote to the unpleasant tone of this book, we imagine, might be found in the very thought jotted down (perhaps at second-hand) by one of the Goncourts regarding those who can find pleasure only in the works of Man, and who are "bored by the works of God." That phrase well describes, in a general way, the soullessness of the work of these fraternal celebrities, in which no reflection of the work of God is ever found.

SOME CURIOUS MEMOIRS

Yet the true creative artist must make his work to some feeble extent a reflection of that which is eternal and divine. Men like the Goncourts are not artists of this creative school. They are rather dilettanti—mere clever speculators and amateurs, like the picture-dealer who knows his market well, like the book dealer skilled in comparative values of authors by long experience alone. By experiences more or less analogous, the Goncourts seem to have comprehended the market values of the chief Romantic writers without any true idea concerning the intrinsic greatness of the men. By observation, and not by intuition, they could understand that Hugo and Gautier were uncommon writers. But why they were great writers probably remained more of a mystery to the Goncourts than to the literary world at large. The authors of the "Diary" write of them as of men who had won a path to success by some peculiarly smart trick of which the secret might be discovered by patient analysis, and as if the Realists might deem it a painful duty to admire them were they not afraid, on the other hand, of being supposed to envy them.

THE FEAR OF DEATH

No book of more curious interest has recently made its appearance in Paris than the volume of M. Francisque Bouillier, entitled *Etudes familiares de psychologie et de morale*. M. Bouillier is a member of the Institut, and, as a scientific writer, ranks highly,—although the critics have declared war against his chapter on Moral Responsibility in Dreams. He takes the bold ground that a man is morally responsive to a certain extent for his dreams;—that fancies of a decidedly wicked character seldom pass through the brain of an upright and virtuous man in sleep,—that such dreams indicate evil inclinations which are subordinated to the will in active life rather through fear of law or public opinion than through natural horror of crime. These views are not in accordance with those of many other writers on similar subjects; and M. Bouillier would find it difficult to condemn, according to this theory, the elder Dionysius of Syracuse, who put his captain Marsyas to death, merely because the latter had *dreamed* of assassinating the tyrant. M. Bouillier claims only that in dreams a man's moral

THE FEAR OF DEATH

responsibility is about on par with that of a drunkard; but surely the drunkard is responsible for violations of law; and public opinion, with its proverbial dictum *in vino veritas* holds him otherwise responsible!

A more interesting chapter than this, however, and one which is not likely to arouse so much criticism, is that treating upon the sentiments of the living in regard to the dead. Here we have a masterly analysis of human character, as well as one, in many respects, totally original. In order to consider the question, the writer requests us to take as an example, not the death of some one deeply loved and mourned, but the death rather of a mere acquaintance, or some one about whose life we feel more or less indifferent. What is the effect of the news of such a death,—which allows our egotism a range of liberty impossible in the case of the passing of a life more closely interwoven with our own? The first effect is simply a shock of surprise! Why? People die every day, every hour, every minute, every second;—there is nothing strange about death, yet we are surprised! We refuse to believe it; the person who brings the news is apt to be closely questioned; parties exclaim, “Why it is only the other day that I had a long talk with

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

him!" etc., etc. We have become so accustomed to give each individual of our acquaintance an imaginary *rôle* to play on the little stage of our lives, and they appear to belong so necessarily to the drama of existence, that the idea of their sudden disappearance never occurs to us. Only great statesmen and great insurance companies train themselves to take good account of such chances, and to make all possible provision against death. The involuntary surprise is succeeded by a very different and much more egotistic feeling—anger! Strange and ridiculous as it may seem to be angered against the dead for dying,—such is the emotion excited in most persons by the news of an unexpected death. One is vexed, annoyed, provoked at the deceased party because he has thus reminded us of a fact which no one likes to think much about, and which it is deemed in most society bad taste to speak about. Then all kinds of questions are asked regarding the last sickness of the dead man,—his habits,—his manner of dressing,—his diet,—his observation of hygiene,—his abstinence or indulgence,—his self-denials or his excesses,—his temperament,—his financial situation,—his domestic relations. No one of these matters would have had the least interest for us at any previous time; but immediately

THE FEAR OF DEATH

after the news of death they seem to possess a most extraordinary importance. It is not because of a purely vulgar curiosity that one asks for so much information; it is because one feels impelled to compare the former situation and habits of the dead man with one's own,—so as to endeavor to explain satisfactorily the means of avoiding a similar death from similar causes. Sometimes when the first answers received afford no consolation whatever, satisfaction is obtained by the investigation of the dead man's family history for several generations; and with a sigh of relief the survivor declares: "Well, I'm glad to know nothing of the kind ever occurred in *our* family!" The main object is to establish the fact that the man died from causes which cannot affect us, or from which we can protect ourselves; and we like to flatter ourselves that we have no reason to fear a similar ending.

After the astonishment and the foolish anger comes a more or less strong feeling of pity. The pity is nevertheless quite as egotistical and as irrational as the anger was. The pity is inspired by the very same personal fear of death, the very same succession of hideous fancies which the fatal news previously evoked,—fancies of damp earth and chilly stone, of worms and darkness, of eyes that will never see the sky

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

again, of the lips that will never utter another whisper, of the heart that has ceased to beat. And if we try to dispassionately analyze our mental condition we will find that it is *ourselves* we pity,—not the dead man; we are unconsciously imagining ourselves in his position, and weeping over our own remains,—as ghosts are said to do under certain fantastic circumstances.

It remains, perhaps, to ask what progress, knowledge, civilization, science, have done toward abating the fear of death? Absolutely nothing! It is not possible for the mind to conceive the state of death as its own; it is consequently impossible also to consider the grim certainty before us without those false and ghastly imaginings which Gautier called *La Vie dans la Mort* and *La Mort dans la Vie*. Such an idea of death is a sort of horrible catalepsy or trance, during which we are conscious of the sensations of being buried, alive and eaten alive,—of smothering and of nightmare. So long as thought remains, the thought of death cannot be separated wholly from the thought of life:—hence the barest idea of death is the most hideous of all ideas possible to conceive. All the romance that has been written on the subject of graves in beautiful places, never really deals with the idea of death, but with the idea of a *second life*, a sort of

THE FEAR OF DEATH

metempsychosis. The higher cultivation of the imagination rather augments the horror of dissolution than decreases it; and the refinement of sensibility does not make the man of the nineteenth century superior to the primitive savage so far as indifference to life is concerned. Indeed a certain form of nervous disease, peculiar to the age, and to which only cultivated persons are liable is that morbid fear of death which Zola made so fine a study of in his *Joie de Vivre*. Fortunately Nature is in one respect singularly kind to man. When he is desperately ill, the fear of death is spared him;—the languor of mind and body renders him absolutely indifferent as to his fate. It is only when he is in comparatively vigorous health that he is liable to awake suddenly before daylight with the words of Ecclesiastes in his ears:—

“Truly the light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.

“But if a man live many years and rejoice in them all;—*yet let him remember the Days of Darkness, FOR THEY SHALL BE MANY!*” . . .

A REMINISCENCE OF BOHEMIA

The possible appearance of a strangely sensational book has been recently hinted of in Parisian *chroniques*,—a volume of Memoirs by the last survivor of that famous quartet of Bohemians whose romantic history in Murger's *Vie de Bohême* has made so many thousands laugh and weep. "Schaunard," the musician, is still alive, —probably because he long since abandoned Bohemianism for the prosaic business of manufacturing wooden sheep and pasteboard cows, and settled down into a good *bourgeois-paterfamilias*. "Schaunard," whose veritable name is Schann, has been recently interviewed by one of the staff of *L'Evenement*, who succeeded in obtaining from him a great deal of novel information regarding the secret history of the *Vie de Bohême*, and who likewise announces that the *Memoirs of Schaunard* may yet make their appearance.

The memory of Schann was suddenly resuscitated on this occasion, as it had been several times previously, by the announcement of the death of one of the famous grisettes—"Phemie Teipturiere." Every once in awhile, a news-

A REMINISCENCE

paper announces the death of "Musette," or some other Bohemienne of the Murger period; and forthwith a host of interviewers invade Schann's toy-factory. This time the ex-musician has openly declared that neither Mimi, nor Musette, nor Phemie, nor Francine ever existed, that the heroines of *La Vie de Bohême* are not individual types, but "collective fictions" in which Murger had synthetized all the faults and fine qualities of all the noted grisettes of the Latin Quarter. As for the heroes of the sketches it is true that "Schaunard" was chiefly studied from Schann himself, while "Rodolphe" represents Murger, and "Marcel" a painter named Lazare, and "Colline" Jean Vallon, once editor of *L'Epoque*,—still, no one of these characters was modeled from any one original exclusively. It is comforting to know these things, for while one feels that episodes as painful must indeed have often occurred in Bohemia, there is some relief, for example, in the discovery that the histories of Mimi and of Francine are not faithful relations of personal experience. . . .

For despite its wit, its marvelous medley of laughter and pathos, the *Vie de Bohême* is really one of the most terrible books ever written. It is an epic of slow suicide;—its fun is too often the forced merriment of those who cultivate

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

laughter only to smother despair; its tendernesses are cruelties; and its martyrdoms immoralities. These Bohemians were youths enamored of art, who, unable to live by their ideal, never dreamed of attempting to earn an honest salary and to devote their leisure time to artistic pursuits. They held that the artist must devote himself wholly to his ideal in order to succeed; and they preferred the miseries of starving independence to the comparative comforts of paid labor. It is true there may be found something noble occasionally in the history of these martyrs, but there is also a great deal which is the reverse,—which has made the term “Bohemian” one of disrepute in our own day—suggesting the idea of one who never pays a bill, borrows from everybody, and inclines more or less to general debauchery. It is also true that Bohemia produced a few painters and musicians and poets; but for one who succeeded in maturing a rare talent amid such surroundings, there were perhaps a hundred who merely imagined themselves destined to great things, and wasted their youth and strength and health in waiting for recognition that never came. Many of real ability likewise subjected themselves to miseries that killed them off at an early age; they beheld fame for the first and last time

A REMINISCENCE

within their grasp just ere death closed their eyes forever. Murger himself exemplified that terrible saying: *On meurt en plein bonheur de son malheur passe*,—"In the midst of good fortune one dies of one's past misfortune."]

Emile Zola has certainly set an example of common-sense (though not altogether a good example of style), for literary ambition to follow. He did not waste much of his time in Bohemia, but sought and obtained a well-paying situation, made good use of his leisure moments, and waited for the day when he could devote himself entirely to literature with certainty of success. This rational policy is being more generally followed in our own day; and the dying cry of Henry Murger,—"*Pas de Boheme!—Surtout pas de Boheme!*" has reached the ears of the new generation. True talent can invariably obtain recognition by dint of patience and perseverance, without useless suffering and destruction of health. Perhaps it is to be regretted in one sense that Murger wrote that famous book (for which, in *feuilleton*-form, he received the magnificent pay of a cent and a half per line);—numbers have been fascinated by the recital without perceiving the terrible moral lesson it contains, and have foolishly tried to repeat the experiences it describes. The

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

histories of the grisettes have been taken for serious love-episodes, whereas they are chiefly narratives of debauchery;—in no instance is the affection of the man strong enough to prompt him to change his disreputable mode of life for the sake of the woman; and if the latter exhibits a devotion worthy of a better subject, it is especially pathetic by contrast with the selfishness of the latter. On the whole Bohemia was heartless, cynical, cruel;—the *romance* of the grisette will not bear ethical examination. It was only one phase of the great immorality of Paris; and there is no reason to regret that the grisette has ceased to be. Her place has been taken by a class of creatures quite good enough for the modern atmosphere of Bohemia, and the working-girl, however inclined to frivolity, has learned by bitter experience to seek affection outside of the Latin Quarter.

Theophile Gautier said of Murger that over his tombstone might be written, "He sang *La Chanson de Musette*,"—just as over Hood's resting-place are graven the words, "He sang the Song of the Shirt." It is indeed the only really admirable thing which Murger created in manner of poetical composition; and even the power of *Les Scenes de la Vie de Bohême* is less due to

A REMINISCENCE

style than to the realism of its sinister laughter
and of its tears of blood.

Adieu, va-t'en, chère adorée,
Bien morte avec l'âme dernier;
Notre jeunesse est enterrée
Au fond du vieux calendrier.
Ce n'est plus qu'en fouillant la cendre
Des beaux jours qu'il a contenus,
Qu'un souvenir pourra nous rendre
La clef des paradis perdus.

Gautier was right; for in the pathos of the poem is revealed the story of the man,—the vain regret of lost youth, of squandered opportunities, of dead hopes, of wasted love,—and perhaps, (who knows?) of one who, like Othello's Jew, may have:—

. . . "Cast a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe."

“LETTERED MISERY”

One might have supposed that the publication of the *Memoirs of Schaunard*, and of many other remarkable characters who took part in the Bohemian life of the Romantic Era, abroad, would give the *coup de grace* to a certain false conception of the duties connected with what some young men are pleased to term “a literary vocation.” Judging, however, by a leading article in the *Paris Figaro* of Dec. 29, entitled “*Misere Lettrée*,” the world of literary aspirants still remains sadly in need of further revelation regarding the subject of living by the pen; and provinces still annually send to the great city their regular quota of moneyless and deluded youths, full of the belief that a man can work his way to fame and fortune by abstaining from all means of making a living except “authorship.” Perhaps one in a thousand succeeds in his ambition, with the aids of a very powerful constitution and a very extraordinary sort of talent;—the rest drift away to wreck or oblivion,—many to the morgue, some to fill petty situations as clerks or salesmen which they dare never thereafter resign under pain of starvation. In fact, one is com-

“LETTERED MISERY”

pelled to believe, after a careful reading of the article in the *Figaro*, that the literary man is not any better off in Paris than elsewhere, and that few of his calling can manage to exist by authorship alone. Journalism saves a multitude from want; some are the fortunate possessors of incomes obtained by inheritance. It is becoming more and more generally recognized that, no matter how great the literary talent of a man, he must depend upon the exercise of some more practical calling or profession for a comfortable existence. And a survey of the work achieved by the martyrs of Bohemianism would probably force the conviction that nothing of the highest order can be expected from starving men. The great names of the Romantic movement, stamped upon enduring monuments of genius, were not the names of men who lived more wretchedly than monks of the desert. Murger, himself, the strongest of the Bohemian group, perished soon after having crossed the threshold of success,—worn out by the terrible trials and hardships of his youth. But Baudelaire was rich. Gautier, though never wealthy, earned a generous income as a journalist. Hugo was always independent. Poor De Nerval, who hung himself, lacked nothing while he clung to journalism,—even the pleasures of extensive travel. The lesser names

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

of the same literary movement include numbers who left very little to posterity. Those who bequeathed much were men who did not scorn to work at other things, in order to make both ends meet, or men who had no need to work at all. There is a point of literary success which may bring pecuniary independence; but it is fair to say that no one can hope to reach it through starvation and suffering.

The relation between conditions of mind and conditions of body is better understood to-day, no doubt, than in the days of the Romantic movement;—something of physiology and hygiene is now taught in all superior educational establishments. A disordered condition of the health produces beyond all question, a more or less disordered condition of the imagination. Fifty years ago there might have been some otherwise intelligent men ready to credit the ancient error that the repression of all natural desires and abstention from all physical gratification tend to bring about an illuminated condition of the mind, —a mystical exaltation of the soul. They do indeed sometimes produce singular illusions and morbid dreams; but we now know with absolute certitude that such visions and visitations indicate a mental condition that, if protracted into the chronic stage, is called, not inspiration, but in-

"LETTERED MISERY"

sanity! Strong, healthy work,—the perfect novel, the eternal poem, the immortal drama,—must be generally classed as the products of sound thoughts generated in sound bodies. One or two extraordinary exceptions—exceptions intrinsically peculiar,—do not affect the rule that vigor of body is the necessary complement to vigor of mind.

When considering the small number of those who become distinguished as authors after enduring great trials and privations, we find, again, that good fortune alone, has in certain cases, rendered the recognition of talent possible. As we owe the existence of works of various Oriental authors to the patronage of powerful rulers some thousand years ago, so in modern civilization wealth has occasionally aided genius to rise to the public surface. Such chances are always strange and rare, notwithstanding; it were the height of folly to depend upon them.

Among the Jews, it has always been the rule that every young man should learn a trade or calling;—the rabbis themselves form no exception. The rule is one which should be invariably applied throughout all classes in every civilized community; and its necessity becomes more apparent according to the steady decrease in value of all products of pure imagination. The

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

age is practical,—not brutally practical, by any means, but practical to such an extent that even literature, to prove successful, must have the merit of realistic presentation. Thus the need of depending upon something better than authorship, is doubled by the need of learning to study life as it is. The world cannot be observed from attic-windows; and human society can never become familiar to those who voluntarily constitute themselves pariahs. One must mingle with men to know them;—and one must work with them in order to comprehend the working of every social problem worthy an author's analysis. From the active worker only can we expect hereafter true pictures of life;—idealism cannot die, but it has to undergo transformations;—it was applied in the past to Shadows; it must be applied, in the future, to Realities.

PART III
RUSSIAN, ENGLISH, GERMAN AND
ITALIAN LITERATURE

RUSSIAN LITERATURE ABROAD

A marked reaction in the matter of literary taste has made itself so manifest in Paris that the French reviews have been latterly devoting considerable space to the consideration of it. It seems that the extraordinary license allowed to writers of fiction during the present republic has at last produced results the very opposite of those predicted; and that the very immorality of certain writers has so satiated public avidity for the Improper, that there is a general demand for literature of a positively pure description. The people have been gorged to nausea with salacious sensationalism; and the great naturalistic debauch is over. Perhaps, after all, it is well there was such a debauch,—if its consequences have indeed wrought its own cure. There will be no more books published whereof the very titles are untranslatable; and the minutely-detailed realism of vice will be relegated, no doubt, to the columns of fifth-rate sensational newspapers. Even Zola may be said to have made a departure; for his *Germinal* is grandiose by comparison with all else he has written;—it is a romance of misery and of horror, but it is epical in execution, and

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

conception, and the character of the young Russian engineer, who represents the Genius of Destruction, is a magnificent piece of idealism. The Zolaïtes have fallen mostly into obscurity. Maupassant left the school at an early epoch, and is daily drawing further and further away from it. Huysmanns, Hennique, and Alexis, have never succeeded in rising to their master's grade. The Goncourts are no longer really popular. On the other hand the greatest literary successors of the time, such as Paul Bouget's *Cruelle Enigme*, and the delightful volumes of Anatole France, show a magnificent return of fine artistic feeling. It is not giving too much credit to Naturalism to say that its influence will be felt in the work of the future literary schools;—it was certainly a monstrous extreme; but it gave the death-blow to many literary extravagances, many theatrical idealisms, many laborious affectations, which will never be resurrected. The future perfect novel in France must afford a happy compromise between the extremes of literary positivism and of ideal portrayal,—between the over elaborated and fantastic French of the florid romanticists, and the studied, vulgar, plainness of the grosser realists. And the general weariness with fiction representing the extremes of either or of both schools is well

RUSSIAN LITERATURE ABROAD

manifested in the sudden and immense popularity that Russian literature has obtained in France.

Nothing is more significant in regard to the period of the naturalistic craze than the temporary paralysis of poetic feeling. The men who published any poetical efforts worthy to endure during those years were men of the old school, the last survivors of Romanticism; and even these added nothing absolutely unique to French poetry. They have been working in familiar grooves. It is not necessary to make an exception in the case of such dialect-masterpieces as *Mireille*, which do not properly rank with national literature. Turned into an unnatural channel, poetical feeling ran to lose itself in wastes of description. There was an idea that the language of the nineteenth century was not potent enough, or varied enough to express the thoughts of the day; and illegitimate literary methods made their apparition,—styles glittering with the cheap glitter of false jewelry, attractive momentarily but useless like paste. There was another idea that all legitimate plot had been exhausted,—that the mine of invention had been worked out; and that in the accumulation of the dross and dirt that had been sifted from literary material by the art of centuries, a new series of themes might alone be found. Latterly, writers

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

like Maupassant and like Loti did much to contradict these strange heresies; but the simple power and intensity of Russian fiction has aided the reform of a great deal more.

It was not that Russian literature had been unknown to the French public for a generation. Long before Zola's time, Prosper Mérimée—whose own compact, powerful, and simple method much resembles that of the best Russian writers,—had introduced litterateurs to the beauties of Pouchkine. Several novels by Gogol had been issued in excellent French versions by a Parisian house; and Tourgueneff was already a giant figure in romance. It would seem as though the public could only appreciate the vigor and elegance of these masterpieces after having discovered the true nature of their French opposites. It was a long time before Tourgueneff obtained the popularity in France that he deserved; and in the meantime other Russian writers were allowed to sink under an oblivion of book-shelf dust. Now, after the death of the mighty novelist, his creations have a vast sale;—Gogol and Pouchkine have been resurrected;—Dostoievsky is the rage; and the novels of Tolstoi are among the literary^csensations of the hour. Moreover works upon the history of Russian literature, and exhaustive volumes of reviews of

RUSSIAN LITERATURE ABROAD

their works, are announced in Parisian literary bulletins.

Now one of the most marked characteristics of Russian fiction is its naked simplicity;—there are no elaborate descriptions, there is no intricate ornamentation, there is no agonizing effort to conceive a new plot. It reveals the artistic truth that plot itself matters little,—that the merit of telling a story or conveying an impression depends upon the originality of the writer, upon the individuality of thought. What Eugene Delacroix said of art is true of literature also:—“*O young artist, you want a subject!—everything is a subject for you,—your thoughts, your emotions in the presence of nature!*” Another merit of the Russian romance is that it is chaste. No Russian writer considers that to be interesting one must be lascivious. Neither does he deem his language insufficient for the expression of his ideas. He tells his narrative without artificial straining after effect,—without pages of highly wrought word-painting,—without minute details of a trifling character,—always with absolute sincerity and truth; and truth is always beautiful as a Greek marble. We have no living writers in English who can compare in this respect with the Russian;—a parallel for their work may be found only in the modern

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Scandinavian novelists,—like Bjornsterne. Their influence abroad is like a good infusion of Gothic blood into anæmic veins,—a restoration of literary virility;—the spirit of the North has ever been vivifying and strengthening like the pure icy winds that kill putrefactions and brighten the blood in the lungs.

In France where literary art had ripened to spoiling, the new taste for Russian literature promises well. It may be that the great law of the growth and decay of national life has a parallel in the growth and decay of national art. Corrupted by its own wealth, enervated by its own luxury, a highly civilized people may pass under the yoke of a semi-barbarous and hardy race, to be remoulded, refined, redeemed by the mixture of strong blood. So also, perhaps, a literature, fallen into decomposition through excessive and abnormal cultivation, may be purified, revived, and reanimated by the invasion of foreign idealism,—the thought of a race that is, if you will, but half-civilized,—yet nevertheless full of faith in man and in God and in truth,—full also of youth and hope, and the great forces these bespeak.

A TERRIBLE NOVEL

In Paris, Russian literature continues to be the sensation. The *Nouvelle Revue* in its latest issue, gives an admirable summary of the history of the elder and of the new schools of that literature, with condensed notices of Gogol; Tourgueneff; Tutcheff, the poet; Ostrowsky, the pupil of Gogol; Gribojedoff, the Russian comedy-writer; Leon and Alexis Tolstoi; Pissemsky; Joukowsky, tutor of Alexander II; Kriloff, the Russian La Fontaine; Boleslas Markevitch, the student whose novels treat of modern Nihilism, and who dared even to make the assassination of the late Emperor the subject of a superb romance. Meanwhile three or four Paris publishers are turning out monthly new translations of the masterpieces of Gogol, Pouchkine, and many others, or printing new editions of translations which had appeared at a less favorable era only to be forgotten. Among these sensations are the works of Leon Tolstoi—enormous novels which require weeks to read;—reproductions of Mérimée's translations of Russian dramas and novelettes; the latest volumes of Tourgueneff; and two notable works by Dostoi-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

evsky, the Siberian exile. One of these last forms, perhaps, the most frightful and powerful romance conceived by any modern writer. Appearing in 1866, it made a sensation in Russia far more profound than that created first in France by the work of Jean Jacques Rousseau. It gave the nightmare to the entire reading population of the empire. Many who read it became seriously ill in consequence. A still greater number could not summon courage to finish it; for the horror of the narration,—incessantly augmented through all the pages of two great volumes, as the horror of a sick dream continually increases with its protraction,—so unnerved them that they hid the romance away and dared not look at it again. These statements may seem exaggerations to American readers, or to European readers, who imagine that they have become familiar with all possibilities of plot and all artifices of literary style. Nevertheless there is only the thinnest possible plot in this terrible novel, and no artifices of style whatever. The power of the work is not in workmanship of phrases, or ingenuity of conception;—it is a psychical force,—a sort of ghastly mesmerism like that exercised by Coleridge's fantastic mariner. And the story is not a supernatural one; it deals only with possibilities and realisms;—

A TERRIBLE NOVEL

but the possibilities are the extremes of suffering that a human mind may endure, and the realisms are pictures of a soul in living agony. Any intelligent person who has tried to read the book will probably confirm all that has been said regarding its power of terrorism. Nothing exists in print so horribly fascinating and yet so frightfully repellant as Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

Theodore Dostoievsky, born in 1822, entered upon his literary career at a time when the social paroxysms of Russia had inaugurated what has since been well-termed The Dynamic Period. The era of violence had not reached its greatest intensity when he began to enter upon manhood; but before he died, in 1880, he had passed through the worst of it. He left the army, for which he was educated, to devote himself to literary work; and became a writer of mark at the very epoch when the profession of author was most difficult, most dangerous, and most underpaid. Already the careers of Russian authors had been, as a rule, peculiarly sinister. Pouchkine and Lermontof were both killed in duels; Ryllief was executed as a revolutionary; Polejaief, Bestulssev and Baraktinski died in exile; Venjevitenof and Kolizof died of starvation; Batjushkof and Gogol went mad. Others had

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

equally dismal destinies. The Russian soul, struggling for utterance, under a mountain weight of oppression, was everywhere manifesting symptoms strangely akin to madness. Mysticism, reverie, hopeless ambition, vain rage mark the psychology of the time. Dostoievsky himself was menaced with insanity. He was saved from it only by a more active life; but that life led him to Siberia. He returned, a wiser man, but not a sadder one—for the world has known no sadder soul than his—to write his awful book.

The plot is simple indeed. An educated sensitive student, struggling with the world for bread, and filled with the dangerous philosophy of his time, conceives that to murder a wicked person, to take away the wealth of that person, and use it for a good purpose, are not essentially evil actions. To him the world contains but two classes of people,—the Extraordinary and the Ordinary. The Extraordinary are privileged to do as they please by mere virtue of the fact that they are Extraordinary;—the Ordinary people only are created to obey laws,—to be good fathers and mothers, and industrious citizens. Imagining himself Extraordinary the student begins life by murdering a rich old hag and her sister, in order “to devote their wealth to the

A TERRIBLE NOVEL

good of his fellow-creatures." Then he finds out he is only Ordinary! His nerves give way; his physical and reasoning powers prove inferior to his will. After years of hideous mental struggles he is compelled to denounce himself to the police as the assassin. Yet he does not imagine himself morally guilty; his mental sufferings are not the sufferings of remorse, but of nervous affection. He speaks only in order to save himself from going mad. If he ever comprehends his crime, it is in the solitude of his Siberian prison, and through the moral teaching of a poor fallen woman who loves him.

A very thin plot apparently; but the details fill two volumes (nearly 700 pages!) in all of which there is not one dull line. The power of the book lies in its marvelous dissection of intricate mental characteristics,—in its unaffected intensity of realism,—in a verisimilitude so extraordinary that the reader is compelled to believe himself the criminal, to feel the fascination of the crime, to endure the excitement of it, to enjoy the perpetration of it, to vibrate with the terror of it, to suffer all the nightmares, all the horrors, all the degradation, all the punishment of it. This is what causes so terrible a nervous strain upon the reader. He actually *becomes* Raskolnikoff the murderer, and

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

feels, thinks, dreams, trembles as the criminal whose psychology is thus exposed for him! The perusal of the pages seems to produce a sort of avatar, a change of souls; if the reader is not wholly Raskolnikoff, he is at least wholly Dostoevsky the author, nearly crazed by his own thoughts. And all the personages of the narrative live with the same violence of realism. Gogol was Dostoevsky's teacher; but never did he write so puissant a book as this.

No book, moreover, has ever given so singular a revelation to French criticism. Here is an author, who, without attempt at style, without effort at form, without refinement of utterance, creates a book in open violation of all esthetic canons, and more powerful than any fiction written in strict obedience to them. A similar phenomenon,—though less pronounced perhaps,—may be discerned in most Russian writers, not excepting the most artistic of all, Tourgueneff. What is the secret of this immense "superiority of the semi-barbaric Russian novel? Is it that the life of other civilizations, while more complex and refined, is also more factitious; and that Russian thought—Antæus-like,—owes its power to a closer contact with mighty nature than our artificial existence allows of?

TOLSTOI'S VANITY OF WISDOM

A singular fact connected with the apparition of a French translation of Tolstoi's *Anna Karenine* is that two exquisite reviews of the work by different critics should have both contained a fine analysis of the same psychological passage,—a unique one in modern romance. In psychological work the Russian novelists are certainly unrivaled;—while the French novel, as a rule, deals specially with the problems and phases of sexual relationship; and while the English novel treats particularly on Duty, as the great rule of life; neither type of fiction attempts to treat of those purely intellectual agonies which are the diseases of the century, and the terror of inexperienced students. In more advanced countries, such matters are left by tacit consent to the philosophers and scientists, who rarely deal in fiction; but in Russia, where the intellectual ferment is so fresh and so puissant, and where the national mind is especially predisposed to extremes of pessimism or mysticism, all the newer school of fiction devotes its art to the study and elucidation of intellectual enigmas. Tolstoi has in this respect, almost rivaled Dostoievsky,—

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

only that instead of analyzing any very extraordinary mental phenomenon, he touches upon territory where all thinkers feel more or less at home, and which has no national frontier,—the domain of modern Doubt. It seems that Tolstoi has, consciously or unconsciously, scattered the history of his own mental sufferings through the chapters of his various novels, and blended it with the words and actions of his many character-studies, after such a manner that keen critical observers can extract from the body of his fiction sufficient material to form a thorough psychological autobiography of the man. Like other writers, Tolstoi seems to have been a profound thinker, a deep doubter, a desperate pessimist by turns; and to have been finally saved from suicide by rushing into mysticism. The narration of these personal experiences has been perceived in *The Cossacks*, in *War and Peace* and especially in *Anna Karenine*, which is now exciting so much attention abroad. What has most interested the critics before referred to, are the exquisitely fine observations of the writer in regard to one phase of his mental life. Too much vain meditation upon the problems of life and death,—too much effort to answer the question that all ages have asked in vain concerning the Reason of Life, the Secret of the Future,—

TOLSTOI'S VANITY OF WISDOM

had almost driven him mad. Life at last began to appear to him "even more terrible than death";—the three most decisive moments of human existence,—which are birth, marriage, and dissolution,—seemed to him as three Sphinxes, each crying out to man "Divine my riddle, or I devour thee!" He wrote this: "*The more enlightened we become, the less we comprehend the meaning of life;—we find only a cruel mockery in the twofold accident of suffering and death.*" . . .

What at last surprised and oddly comforted him for his conviction was the discovery that all those terrible riddles which haunt the minds of cultivated men and well-trained thinkers, are solved without any effort at all by the thousand millions of simple and ignorant souls who form the bulk of humanity. A half-savage Cossack-girl could better answer these questions of life and death than the accomplished graduate of the highest university!

This novel appreciation of existence in a healthier light forms the remarkable feature of Tolstoi's splendid novel; and the fact has impelled one of his most admiring reviewers to make a beautiful comparison between his confession of new faith, and the famous incident of Buddha and the pariah-wife;—well-known to all who have read the *Light of Asia*. The same doubts

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

and fears that tortured Tolstoi were those also which, it is said, impelled the young Indian prince to abandon a palace, "cooled by the fans of thirty thousand women," and to wander through the world as a mendicant. Desiring to convert to his creed the poor young woman who voluntarily brought him to eat and drink, Buddha, we are told, asked her: "Do life and love alone suffice to make living sweet?" Then she answered, saying:—"Lo! the raindrop which cannot moisten the great forest, fills, nevertheless, the cup of the lotos-flower. That which the books teach, I do humbly accept, knowing I am not wiser than the elders. . . . And I think that

• Good cometh out of Good, and Evil out of Evil only. . . . My life is happy; but I cannot forget those whose lives are sorrowful—may the Gods help them! So far as I know what is good to do, I strive to do it,—believing what ought to be will be, and that all is for the best." And Gotama, hearing this and more, cried out: "O woman, thou teachest even the Teacher; and in thy simple faith there is a wisdom surpassing wisdom!—O tender heart,—that knowest without instruction *even as the dove that finds its way to its nest by love alone*,—may I be able to accomplish my duty but half as well as thou fulfillst thine!" . . .

TOLSTOI'S VANITY OF WISDOM

The moral of Tolstoi's autobiographical confession is the moral of the old Buddhist legend indeed! All the experience of humanity affirms that the only satisfactory way to solve the riddle of life is to perform one's rôle on the world-stage as earnestly and truly as one knows how, without pausing to consider the incomprehensible. The Silences and the Eternities may not be questioned without peril;—the dizziness of the Infinite is a vertigo which the mightiest minds cannot risk with impunity!

THE TWO ARNOLDS

The interview between Matthew Arnold and a reporter of the New York *Tribune*, as published Oct. 23, reveals some curious traits on the part of Mr. Arnold. He expressed himself astonished that any one should ever have supposed Edwin Arnold to be his brother, and clinched his point by observing:—"He is no relation whatever. His book, *The Light of Asia*, seems to have taken a great hold here. It seems to me quite unintelligible, and not to be compared with the great work of St. Hilaire, *Le Buddha*. It is like the character of Christ written by a Jew. One prefers to go to more authentic sources."

There was something petty in this observation;—betraying a peculiar vanity—much ruffled at finding that Edwin Arnold was better known and loved in the United States than Matthew Arnold. The unintelligibility of *The Light of Asia* has been discovered by none but the "distinguished essayist," and its immense popularity wherever English readers are numerous,—whether in America, India, New Zealand, Australia or Great Britain,—affords a very large denial to the green-eyed observations of Mr. Matthew Arnold.

THE TWO ARNOLDS

The comparison of *The Light of Asia* to Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire's work is simply absurd. *Le Buddha et Sa Religion* is no more a poem than is Max Müller's essay upon the *Stratification of Language*;—it is a very exhaustive and valuable review of Buddhism ancient and modern, based upon Oriental authorities; and it comprises a curious and trustworthy biography of Siddartha. But Saint-Hilaire never attempted to do what Edwin Arnold has done so nobly and so touchingly,—to make us feel the spirit of all that is grand and pure and unselfish in a faith confessed to-day by unknown hundreds of millions of worshipers in the remoter East. Interesting as are the works of men like Spence Hardy and Saint-Hilaire, they were written more with the view of proving the inferiority of Buddhism as compared with Christianity, than for the purpose of teaching the Occident to appreciate those marvelous ethical beauties which the religion of Gotama certainly possesses for any unbiased thinker. Says Saint-Hilaire: "I have only one purpose in publishing this book,—to bring out in relief by strong contrast, the grandeur and the beneficent truth of our own spiritual beliefs";—Spence Hardy tells us that he only wrote "for the messengers of the cross." These biographical sketches of Buddha are in consequence far

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

more worthy of the criticism about "a life of Christ written by a Jew," than Edwin Arnold's master-work of verse. Had no books upon Buddhism been written but those of Burnouf, Saint-Hilaire, Beal, and other scholars, the great majority of European and American readers would never have known, or cared to know, the story of the Indian Christ,—although the great scholar Fansboll well said:— . . . "the sooner all mankind shall have been made acquainted with his doctrines, the better it will be; for he is one of the heroes of humanity." Edwin Arnold first taught the vast reading public of Great Britain and of this country,—the English-speaking races of the nineteenth century,—what Buddha's life was, and what his doctrines were. He presented this strange and beautiful jewelry of Eastern thought in a setting of verse richer and stronger than anything poetical Matthew Arnold has ever written, *or could write*. The author of *The Light of Asia* has even enhanced the original beauty and pathos of the story in his treatment of it;—let any one compare the story of the Flight as told in the Singhalese *Nidanakatha*, in Beal's *Romantic Legend*, in Saint-Hilaire, in any other translation from original MS., or compilations based upon such authorities, with the stanzas of Edwin Ar-

THE TWO ARNOLDS

nold, and decide for himself which narrative is best calculated to elevate the thoughts of the reader. Perhaps the luminous interpretation of *Nirvana*, with which that superb composition closes, might excite scholarly criticism or positivist doubt; but the interpretation is in truest harmony with that universal yearning of the human heart for many a thousand years, and will surely inspire noble thoughts to all who read it.

"Going to more authentic sources" than Edwin Arnold is something Matthew Arnold would certainly prefer in view of his belief in his own immense superiority; but those who desire to go to the most authentic sources for information upon the very subjects of Matthew Arnold's lecture and colorless poems would scarcely care to pay for the sound of his voice. Whether "authentic" enough for his jealous namesake, Edwin Arnold is certainly authentic enough for the American public; and thousands would gladly flock to hear the author of *The Light of Asia*, were he to visit the United States. •

NOT WITHOUT HONOR, SAVE IN HIS OWN COUNTRY

Some reason for the surprise and vexation exhibited by Mr. Matthew Arnold upon his arrival in this country at being taken for "the brother of Edwin Arnold" seems to be revealed by an amusing anecdote which Capt. James B. Eads relates. It may not generally be known that the great engineer is a man of the finest literary tastes and artistic sensibilities; and that he holds the somewhat novel but irrefutable theory, that no one can be a really great constructor who lacks the sentiment of the beautiful. In this statement he is well borne out by another mighty engineer with whom he may be not unfavorably compared—Ferdinand de Lesseps, whose literary abilities and love of *belles-lettres* were celebrated by eminent writers that enjoyed his companionship long ere he became a member of the French Academy. Captain Eads is especially an admirer of the great modern poets—of Rossetti, Browning, Tennyson and others, whose finest strophes are quite as deeply impressed on his remarkable memory, as are the principles of those sciences with which his name is now so nobly connected.

NOT WITHOUT HONOR

He is a fine reader—(rare accomplishment)—a charming reciter, and often astonishes those introduced to him for the first time by repeating the best stanzas of the poet they most admire. Captain Eads' own literary sympathies have made him perhaps the warmest admirer of Edwin Arnold in America. He knows by heart the finest passages in the *Light of Asia* in *Pearls of the Faith*, in the *Indian Song of Songs*, and, doubtless by this time also of those *Indian Idyls* containing the first delightful English version of the most beautiful episode of the Mahabharata,—*Nala and Damayanti*.

At a banquet recently attended by Captain Eads in London, where a number of the most eminent engineers of the world were present, our distinguished fellow-citizen was asked to give the assembly one of those little treats of which we have spoken. He acceded by repeating one of Edwin Arnold's briefer poems,—*She and He*, a composition less artistic, indeed, than *The Rajpoot Wife* or various pieces belonging to the same collection, but peculiarly touching in its beautiful simplicity, and dealing with a phrase of feeling familiar to every human heart. A little murmur of pleasure succeeded to applause, and several of the guests asked the name of the author of the poem. "Edwin Arnold," replied

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Capt. Eads,—“Edwin Arnold, one of the most original poets you have.”

—“*Never heard of him,*” was the stunning answer.

But, although they had never heard of him, they were so much impressed by the verses, that several requests were made of Captain Eads to inform them where the book was to be found, which he gladly promised to do. It was not, perhaps, after all, so strange, that those distinguished men, whose minds were perpetually occupied with serious practical sciences, should not have found time or opportunity to become acquainted with Edwin Arnold. Captain Eads promised himself the pleasure of introducing them to the author of *The Light of Asia*; and next day visited a fashionable bookstore, for the purpose of buying some copies of the book, and presenting them to his English friends. Strange to say, the head-clerk had never heard of Edwin Arnold.

—“You mean Matthew Arnold?” he magisterially observed.

—“No, sir!” replied Captain Eads, “I mean Edwin Arnold,—the author of *The Light of Asia*, you know?”

—“Don’t know!” answered the clerk,—“never heard of him.”

A visit to another bookstore was attended

NOT WITHOUT HONOR

with the same result. A third visit proved quite as unsatisfactory. Then Captain Eads sought the great bookstores of Regent Street and Piccadilly, and asked for Edwin Arnold. "You mean Matthew Arnold?" said the bookdealers.

And Captain Eads could not refrain from expressing astonishment that a poet, whose works were for sale in every American bookstore, should be utterly ignored in London.

"But, my dear sir," sarcastically observed a bookseller,—"*you have many poets in America that we do not hear of in England.*"

And this was the local fame of Edwin Arnold, author of *The Light of Asia*, of *Pearls of the Faith*, of *The Indian Song of Songs*, of *Indian Idyls*, of *The Iliad and Odyssey of India*, of *A Grammar of the Turkish Language*,—Edwin Arnold, whose works are advertised the world over in the great catalogues of Oriental and Linguistic Societies,—Edwin Arnold, member of the Order of the Star of India, and many learned societies,—Edwin Arnold, above all whilom editor of the London *Daily Telegraph*, with "the largest circulation in the world!" Verily, a prophet is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house!

That Edwin Arnold's books should not have been for sale in certain fashionable London

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

bookstores might be accounted for in various ways,—probably his publishers (Messrs. Trubner & Co.) had a special method of placing his books on the market. But that London booksellers—generally supposed to be a well-read class of men—should never have heard of him, is certainly surprising. Within the last few years scarcely a new book has appeared upon the subject of Indian literature, Buddhism, or kindred subjects, in which some inviting reference has not been made to him; and judging by the notices of his works in Indian reviews he must be nearly as great a favorite in the Oriental colonies as he is in the United States. His contributions to leading English reviews would alone obtain him a large and refined audience in Great Britain; but it is possible that the peculiar character of his work,—dealing with unfamiliar and exotic subjects,—does not lend itself to popular appreciation. Moreover, literary success in England is somewhat slow;—in the enormous annual crop of literature a vast mass of inferior material must be winnowed out and cast aside by public opinion, before the few rich grains of sterling value are properly perceived. Finally, it is not impossible that the family name of the author of *Indian Idyls* has been somewhat of a literary misfortune to him. Matthew Arnold was already famous

NOT WITHOUT HONOR

before Edwin was recognized as a literary force;—and we know that a new English writer named Thackeray or Dickens would have a poor chance of leaping into popular favor if he published his first work with the cognomen of either great dead master on the title-page. As to comparative merit there are and will always continue to be diversities of opinion regarding the two Arnolds. In England it is as fashionable to admire Matthew as it is here to admire Emerson. The old classic school of English critics would give the preference to Matthew Arnold's poetry;—they neither admire nor encourage composition enriched with Oriental art,—wood-carving wrought as with Indian ivory-chisels;—mosaics of fancy designed as with diamond and pearl, with ruby and emerald. To believers in the new and more generous school,—the Romantics of our day,—the champions of principles that will prevail as surely as there is a law of progress,—Edwin Arnold must occupy the higher place, both as artist and preacher. His noble enthusiasm for the beauties of other faiths than ours, finds a strong modern sympathy among all who nourish the hope of a future Universal Religion—a universal brotherhood of man in the recognition of Universal Truth; and his introduction of strange and exquisite flowers of thought and of

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

language, to the domain of English literature, will yet have its effect in the remodeling, and enrichment, and enlargement of Occidental expression.

EDWIN ARNOLD'S NEW BOOK

Of all the *Upanishads*,—those philosophical books of the Brahmins, which have found worthy translators and just appreciation only within our day, the most widely known to Occidental readers is the *Katha-Upanishad*. Eight celebrated translations of it have been made into various European languages;—French, German, and English writers have united in its praise as a magnificent specimen of the mystic poetry and philosophy of the Hindoos. The first English translation was made by Rammohun Roy;—the most finished and scholarly of all the translations of it is probably that of Max Müller, published in 1884 (*Sacred books of the East*, vol. XV). There is perhaps but one other fragment of Brahminic literature which has excited equal admiration among Western scholars, and found an even greater number of European translators, —that *Bhagavad-Gita* which compelled the learned Schlegel to cry aloud: “O thou sacred singer, thou inspired interpreter of divinity!—whatever may have been thy name among mortals, I bow before thee! Hail to thee, author of that mighty poem, whose oracles lift up

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

the soul, in joy ineffable, toward all that is sublime eternal and divine;—full of veneration, I salute thee above all singers, and I worship unceasingly the trace of thy footsteps.” Grand indeed is that hymn, which fills the silence of one mystic pause in the tremendous drama of the *Mahabharata*; yet it were hard to select a sublime image from among the majestic verses of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, for which some parallel might not be found in the pages of the *Katha-Upanishad*. Both alike seek to touch the veil of eternity,—to answer the enigmas of life and death,—to expound the relation of humanity to divinity; and the thought of these colossal teachers of universal truths, seems, like Siva’s column of fire, at once to penetrate the deepest deep and to tower into heights beyond the universes of the stars. As in the *Bhagavad-Gita* we must pass through many vapory gates and courts of romance, in order to hear the voice of Krishna speaking of that which is eternal,—so, likewise in this *Upanishad* we are guided through a beautiful maze of legend into the presence of divinity.

For the *Katha-Upanishad* is a story,—a story so old that its origin is long forgotten; and it may be found, in vaguer shape, among books still more ancient. Briefly told it runs thus:—Vag-

EDWIN ARNOLD'S NEW BOOK

asravasa, desiring the rewards of heaven, resolved to give away all that he possessed. And his son Nikiketas, filled with a great faith, cried out as the flocks and herds were driven in to be given to the priests: "Dear father, to whom wilt thou give me?" But the father answered not a word. Then the boy asked him a second and a third time; and Vagasravasa, at last becoming angry, exclaimed: "Lo! I give thee to Death!" Now the word of a Brahmin, however hasty, may not be recalled;—and the boy passed away to the underlife,—to the Kingdom of Yama, Lord of Death.

Now Yama was absent, abiding for a time with the gods of the highest heaven. And when he returned, he beheld at the dark gates of his domain, a young Brahmin waiting; and he said to him: "Thou hast been here three days without food or shelter or the offerings due to one of thy quality. Ask now three boons of me; and I shall grant whatever thou desire." And Nikiketas asked, first, that he might return to his father, so that the heart of Vagasravasa should be comforted. Then Yama promised him that he should return to his father,—our English poet says, only as a shadow,—a shape of dream; and beg him ask a second boon. Thereupon Nikiketas asked Death, saying: "There is a

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

heaven where fear never dwells—not even the fear of thee; and there is a holy sacrifice by which men may, after passing through thy kingdom, arrive thither. Teach me that sacrifice.” Then Yama taught him the sacrifice of fire which is called the rite of Nikiketas even unto this day; and bade him ask the third boon. But the boy only asked him that he should teach him the conquest of Death,—the truth which men have eternally sought in vain,—the secret of that which Death hides and never reveals, and, which being learned, would destroy even the fear of destruction. Then Yama bade him choose any other boon than this,—though it should be to return to earth as a King, to live in unfading youth for a thousand years, or to wed the fairest of the Apsaras, who are the dancing girls of heaven. But Nikiketas held all such joys to be of little worth compared with that which is eternal; and would have no other boon. So, at last, great Yama, being bound by his sacred promise, yielded to the youth’s prayer, and taught him the secret of life and the secret of death, and the nature of good and evil, and the nature of the Universal Soul, and of the soul of man which is but a spark of the Infinite Light. And the chief secret of all which he taught him was that man, by learning the nature of his own Self,

EDWIN ARNOLD'S NEW BOOK

learns also to know the Higher Self of which all things are a part,—the supreme Invisible of which the visible world is but an emanation. And Nikiketas, having been thus taught by Death to know God, became as one eternal, immortal, over whom even Yama himself had no power.

This is the exquisite theme which Edwin Arnold has chosen for his new poem, *The Secret of Death*. Mr. Arnold has versified but three *vallis*, or the first *Adhyaya* of the entire six *vallis* into which the original is divided. The ending is not abrupt, however; for the real story ends with the third *valli*, although Yama continues to speak through another whole *Adhyaya*,—in language whose mystical beauty and colossal powery of imagery seem veritably worthy of a supernatural origin. The English poet represents himself as visiting in India a certain aged Hindoo priest, who aids him to read the Sanscrit text of the *Katha*, and teaches him its more obscure riddles with the help of scholarly commentaries and explanatory quotations from other *Upanishads*. The Englishman's horse is tied to a tree without the little hermitage, where doves coo in multitude; and a great tame cobra slumbers by the doorway, while the lesson is going on. This conceit is very pretty, and very gracefully carried out,—except perhaps, in the

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

matter of citing a fragment of the original Sanscrit at the beginning of almost every paragraph,—just as a college-boy first reads a sentence in Latin or in Greek, before parsing or translating it to his teacher. The repetition of these Sanscrit words must prove at last somewhat wearisome to many readers.

But the old Sanscrit treatise is in itself too beautiful to be much imposed upon by any modern poet. What poet could embellish the verses of the *Bhavagad-Gita*?—what modern prose lend power to the words of Death? All, indeed, that Edwin Arnold has been able to do in this case, was to popularize an unfamiliar Indian masterpiece, and to remount certain gems belonging to it in less highly intricate setting. Sometimes the poet seems to have overlooked certain beauties in the original text, which deserved much at his hands. For instance, we select the following from page 24 of *The Secret of Death*:—

. . . Then Yama answered, "This was asked of old
Even by the gods. This is a subtle thing
Not to be told, hard to be understood!
Ask me some other boon: I may not grant—
Choose wiser, Nikiketas; force me not
To quit this debt—release me from my bond."
Then still again spake Nikiketas:—"Ay!

EDWIN ARNOLD'S NEW BOOK

The gods have asked this question; but, O Death,
Albeit thou sayest it is a subtle thing,
Not to be told, hard to be understood,
Yet know I none can answer like to thee,
And no boon like to this abides to ask.
I crave this boon."

We prefer by far to the above verses the beautiful simplicity of the original text, so far as it can be preserved in the English translation of Max Müller:—

. . . Death said: "Choose now, O Nikiketas, thy third boon."

(20).—Nikiketas said: "There is that doubt, when a man is dead;—some saying, he is; others, he is not. This I should like to know, taught by thee;—this is the third of my boons."

(21).—Death said: "On this point even the gods have doubted formerly;—it is not easy to understand. That subject is subtle. Choose another boon, O Nikiketas; do not press me, and let me off this boon." •

(22).—Nikiketas said: "On this point even the gods have doubted, indeed, and thou, Death, hast declared it to be not easy to understand, *and another teacher like thee is not to be found*: surely no other boon is like unto this!" . . .

The weird power of the words we have italicized is almost lost in Arnold's versification; and

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

other passages might be cited in proof of similar comparative weakness. Beautiful, however, are those pages in which the writer is able to show his own individuality, and to place his own charming interpretation upon the darker portions of the metaphysical riddle. For the *Katha-Upanishad* is no more easy reading than the *Vedantasara*; and, leaving aside those sublime truths which all broad human thought accepts, the pantheism of the work is not wholly comprehensible by those who have not made a special study of the Hindoo philosophical system. In this poem, as in his *Light of Asia*, Arnold has wisely adhered to the idea which underlies all Indian theological speculation,—the all-embracing infinity of the Supreme Self,—into which souls melt as the raindrop mingles with the sea, and leaves aside those eccentric dogmas about the Atman, the rites of the ascetic, the penances by which the senses are suppressed so that the mind can obtain cognizance of its relation to deity. The very jewel-thought of the *Upanishad* he has conserved;—it is the same which inspired Emerson's *Brahma*, and which also doubtless, in the first Persian translation of the old Indian book, might have inspired Djelaleddin Rumi to write those mighty verses, so grandly translated by Ritter:—

NEW BOOK

BRAHMA

I am the mote in the sunbeam, and I am the burning
sun;

"Rest here!" I whisper the atom; I call to the orb:
"Roll on!"

I am the blush of morning, and I am the evening
breeze;

I am the leaf's low murmur, the swell of the terrible
seas,

I am the net, the fowler, the bird and its frightened cry;
The mirror, the form reflected, the sound and its echo, I;

The lover's passionate pleading, the maiden's whispered
fear,

The warrior, the blade that smites him, his mother's
heart-wrung tear;

I am intoxication, grapes, winepress, and must, and wine,
The guest, the host, the traveler, the goblet of crystal
fine.

I am the breath of the flute, I am the mind of man,
Gold's glitter, the light of the diamond, and the sea-
pearl's lustre wan,—

The rose, her poet-nightingale, the songs from his throat
that rise.

•
The flint, the sparks, the taper, the moth that about it
flies;

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

I am both Good and Evil, the deed and the deed's intent,
Temptation, victim, sinner, crime, pardon and punish-
ment;

**I am what was, is, will be;—creation's ascent and fall;
The link, the chain of existence; beginning and end of all.**

—And he that comprehends these things, who perceives the height above the highest, the deep below the deepest, becomes divinely immortal by very reason of that knowledge, and death hath no power over him. Shall mankind ever learn these things? Men of the Orient aver that holy ascetics have done so, and that all who truly desire to know the infinite may do so by following in the footsteps of the teachers. Wise men of the Occident only dare to hope that in the remote future man may possibly attain to that supreme knowledge which will give him the conquest over death, and lordship over time and space.

The poem which we have been considering, however, is only the first in the volume. We would like to call special attention to such Hindoo ballads as *The Rajah's Ride*, full of virile spirit, and sonorous as with a ringing of steel;—or that beautiful „Bihari Mill-song, with its strange and melancholy burthen.

A DEFINITIVE ROSSETTI

The new London reprint, in two volumes, of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's complete works, prose and poetical, will probably form the definitive edition of this wonderful singer's creations,—and nevertheless will stimulate research for earlier editions, English and American. For these beautiful volumes, edited by the dead poet's brother, contain various changes from the original reading,—and they also show us a persistence of the suppression of certain pieces which Rossetti latterly condemned in spite of his best friends' advice. The sonnet, *Nuptial Sleep*, first attacked by Robert Buchanan, in a most ungenerous article for which he apologized in verse after Rossetti's death, does not reappear;—since in this matter William Rossetti deemed himself commanded by his brother's decision. A sonnet, *On the French Liberation of Italy* has also been excluded for a similar reason; and notice is given of the existence in private print of sundry verses which can only appear by consent of the gentleman to whom Dante Rossetti presented them as a gift. Again, in Rossetti's best known ballads, some changes appear. For ex-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

ample the burden in *Eden Bower*, which originally ran:—

Eden bower's in flower,
And O the bower and the hour!

has been shortened to

Sing Eden bower!
Alas the hour!

A considerable addition to the ghostly ballad of *Sister Helen*, will seem a more desirable emendation;—comprising half-a-dozen stanzas or more relating to the bride of Keith of Ewern, who makes her first appearance in this amplified version. Among new poetical pieces upward of thirty sonnets, and other poems, in French, English, and Italian appear,—together with a number of fragments, broken lines, rhymed thoughts, such as this melancholy one:

As much as in a hundred years she's dead!
Yet is to-day the day on which she died.

Apparently every scrap of interest found among Rossetti's papers has now found the light,—excepting those left unprinted by his own will, or given to friends. All the poems familiar to American readers appear in Volume

A DEFINITIVE ROSSETTI

I;—the second division of the work consisting mostly of those magnificent translations and studies of Italian poets, entitled *Dante and His Circle*, formerly published as a distinct work, and long familiar to the literary world.

An admirable good taste is visible in the brief notes and the introductory chapter by William Rossetti. He tells us a little regarding his brother's life;—merely referring to the biographical studies by Thomas Hall Caine and by William Sharp; but the little he does tell is interesting to a degree. It appears that, like all poets destined for great work, Rossetti showed his tendencies at a very tender age;—if the readers of Hall Caine were astonished to hear that *The Blessed Damozel* was written at the age of nineteen, how much more will they now be surprised to hear that Rossetti wrote a drama in his sixth year! "It was, of course, pure nonsense," his brother writes; but that a child of six years could have the mental development necessary not only to conceive, but to commit to writing, the idea of even the most puerile of dramas seems little short of miraculous. His tastes in reading were strongly defined, and by no means so indiscriminate as might have been imagined. He had no taste for Scandinavian or old German subjects—at least not after boyhood,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

during which he attempted a translation of the *Nibelungen*;—felt no interest in Oriental literatures;—and liked no modern French poets except Hugo and De Musset, and probably no other French poets at all except François Villon. (Swinburne himself, a warm admirer of Rossetti, gracefully confessed the superiority of the latter's translation of the *Ballad of Dead Ladies*.) Of English poets, Coleridge probably exercised the first powerful influence on Rossetti, but he read Poe, Tennyson, and Keats together. "Lastly came Browning," says the biographer,—“and, like the serpent-rod of Moses, for a time swallowed up all the rest.” As might be easily guessed from his consummate treatment of quaint themes and his unparalleled mastery of curious and old-fashioned words, he loved Chaucer, Spenser, and the Elizabethan writers. How he delighted in the old ballads, his own perfect imitations best reveal. But what he was most fond of were tales of magic, witchcraft, and ghosts,—a taste inborn, no doubt, in this master-wizard among all literary ghost-seers. “Poetry,” wrote the dead singer in one of his note-books,—“is the apparent image of unapparent realities.” Of course Rossetti never believed his spectral beings to exist outside of his own brain; but while they lived there they were

A DEFINITIVE ROSSETTI

indeed the unapparent realities of which he could give the most startlingly-apparent images.

The sense of the supernatural feeling, so vivid in Rossetti's poetry, will be found also in his prose, of which we have two very remarkable specimens in Vol. I,—*Hand and Soul*; and *St. Agnes of Intercession*. The first is a complete short tale, which reminds one a little of Washington Irving in a phantom-mood, but yet more antiquated and polished in form than even the *Adelantado of the Seven Cities*. It is the story of a painter whose own soul made itself femininely visible, to become his model;—there is in it one description of a medieval Italian faction-fight at the door of a cathedral, a miracle of splendid fury. The second tale is only a fragment—a most provoking fragment, based on the fantastic theory of Pre-existence. The painter who tells it is startled with that of the medieval Angioleri, and his portrait-face, painted after that of his own sweetheart, with the face of Angioleri's *St. Agnes*. Visiting Italy he finds that Angioleri's ancient painting is the counterpart of his own. He finds also that he *is* Angioleri;—that his Mary is the same Italian girl who sat for *St. Agnes* centuries ago. But how?—why? . . . He is thought to be mad when he speaks of his discovery; and the

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

fragment ends abruptly in its most startling phase. The purely psychological portion of this recital vividly suggests the influence of Poe. A series of plans for stories, found among the poet's papers show, however, a tendency to individuality of a totally different kind, and one in which he would perhaps have proved unrivaled,—antiquated and medieval themes. It is impossible not to regret that the theme of *The Palimpsest* was never developed into a story.

William Rossetti himself seems to have been awhile in doubt whether to print the inedited *Henry the Leper*,—a translation of Hartmann von Aue's *Der Arme Heinrich*. The subject of this poem was re-adapted in Longfellow's "Golden Legend,"—but the German creation, treating the story in a simpler spirit, suffers horribly by comparison,—whether in structure, sympathetic power, or picturing. Excellent as Rossetti's version doubtless is, one finds relief in turning from it to such a bit of translation as the following, from Victor Hugo's *Burgraves*:—

Through the long winter the rough wind tears;
In their white garments the hills look wan.

Who cares? Love on!

Love on!—who cares?

A DEFINITIVE ROSSETTI

My mother is dead!—God's patience wears!
It seems my chaplain will not have done!
Love on: who cares?
Who cares?—love on!

The Devil, hobbling up the stairs,
Comes for me with his ugly throng!
Love on: who cares?
Who cares?—love on!

. . . Definitive as this edition may be, it will give a fresh stimulus to the biographical and anecdotal portion of Rossettian literature, rather than satiate lovers thereof. One is a little disappointed, in spite of one's judgment, at the shrewdly artistic meagreness-in-detail of the preface. It lends fresh zest to the hungry and pardonable curiosity of those who loved the poet, and would wish to know more of the man. It especially increases the desire to learn something more of that beautiful affection which gave such exquisite and passionate color to the *House of Life*, through all its peerless and priceless century of sonnets. It also disappoints in offering no new portrait; but this disappointment is partially offset by some notes which will convince any reader that Rossetti did not resemble the portraits already published of him, which make him look like a man with a snub nose. His

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

face was strongly aquiline; and the bridge of its most prominent feature sprang far out from beneath the bold vault of the forehead, like a buttress;—it was not the vague and insipid visage of the cheap prints.

SOME HUMAN FRAILTY

The beautiful revelation of Longfellow's personality as given through recent biographical work, tends to confirm two popular beliefs,—one very ancient, one more modern,—concerning poets in general: first, that the real character, the heart or soul of the author, is truly revealed in his work; second, that great poets are born singers, and manifest their vocation at a very early age. Occasionally, however, and particularly, perhaps, in this era of nervous sensibility, something more than the moral tone of a character,—the intimate charm of a mind, delicate as a blossom scent,—betrays itself in the work of a literary artist: the history of some trial, the secret of some passion. In our stronger poets,—and Longfellow must be included among them,—this is rarely visible. Tennyson, Browning, Morris, do not betray themselves,—and perhaps have nothing to betray. There is a power of self-control among singers of English or American blood, which almost always subordinates the personal to the artistic feeling so as to disguise the former beyond recognition. With the *Latin*s it is frequently otherwise. A Baudelaire tells in •ro-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

mantic, but not interpretable language, the story of his passion for a woman of some darker race. A Bouilhet gives voice to the pains and regrets of misplaced affection. A De Musset, icily formal in the fashionable world, confides the agonies of his secret weakness to song. And perhaps the only really great English poet of our generation who has suffered his soul to appear naked between the golden bars of perfect verse, was of Latin origin,—the never wholly Anglicized Rossetti. Possibly English influence had corrected and purified certain strong tendencies to weakness in that splendid talent, without seriously affecting the strange charm of its exotic quality. Had Rossetti's feeling been less spiritualized, one might have expected him to write something marvelous as to form and brilliancy, but cold, like sparkling jewelry;—or, had it been still more spiritualized, something like those particular phases of Shelley which Carlyle characterized as "shrieky, frosty." As it was, he made his song unique—with delicate sensuousness, with tenderness, with a sort of spiritualized amorousness,—like the ecstasy of saints. What a singular character and genius the man must have had who could write *The Blessed Damozel* at nineteen!

It certainly needed no biographical revelation

SOME HUMAN FRAILTY

to inform the reader of Rossetti's sonnets, and of many other priceless things,—*The Portrait, Love's Nocturn, The Stream's Secret*, for instance,—that a Woman inspired these. What is the *House of Life* itself but a psychal autobiography? Yet an irrepressible and not illegitimate curiosity might have been excited by the certainty that the mysterious lady was more than ordinarily beautiful, gifted, and lovable. For this poetry was portrait-painting—portraiture of both soul and body,—positive, unmistakable: no phantom-creation of vague desire, like those Maids of Paradise whom Mahomet wrote of only while living alone with the senescent Kadidja.

Naturally, such public curiosity could not be decently satisfied till after the death of the poet, and was not, in fact, until Mr. Hall Caine published his touching volume of *Recollections* in 1883. These present the story of Rossetti's life as one of the most singular and pathetic in the whole modern range of literary existences; and his exquisite inspiration is revealed to us in the person of Miss Elizabeth Siddal,—who first became his model for all those dreary Madonnas, Liliths, angels, and the other beautiful subjects of his paintings,—and then, as his wife the model for those soul-pictures portrayed

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

with all luxury of colored words. (For Rossetti, like Gautier, began his artistic career as a painter;—though, in his case, unlike that of the great French poet, the vocation was a true one: his pictures were not less impressive and oddly beautiful than his extraordinary verse.) . . . In his young model he found, beside uncommon physical grace and charm, rare esthetic feeling,—a pronounced talent for poetry and painting. He cultivated her gifts, taught her all he knew, loved her, won her heart, and made her his wife. For a time it seemed to him that he had reached the supreme height of romantic happiness;—the poetry she created within him, would indicate that she had proved not only all he wished, but more than he had ever dreamed of. Each phase of their love, every gracious thought about her,—all the hopes, fears, anxieties, affections they shared in common,—were set, as jewels, in the perfect lapidary-work of his sonnets. These, he copied into a blank-book as a gift for her; most of them he then had little thought of publishing, although he had contributed other masterpieces, startling in their power and originality, to various periodicals. But all these delightful dreams were cruelly and terribly broken by the death of the young wife, after less than two years of marriage. To such a char-

SOME HUMAN FRAILTY

acter as Rossetti's, the blow was frightful—worse than death; the wound hopelessly incurable. He entered the chamber with the little book in his hand, and spoke to the dead as if she still could hear;—he told her all those poems had been inspired by her, written for her, dedicated to her, and should be buried with her forever. Between her cheek and her loose hair, the book was placed; and she was laid away in some dark vault of Highgate Cemetery, to sleep the everlasting sleep, with her golden head pillowed upon the little book, containing all those wizard-flowers of language created by the beauty of her face and of her soul.

Then the years passed. Utterly shattered by his grief, the bereaved man had become a victim of the chloral habit—acquired in the first period of a long mental agony that rendered sleep impossible and madness probable enough. He wrote and painted, as much for distraction as for aught else, and created many beautiful things; yet there can be no doubt that the real spirit of his genius and ambition were buried with his affection. One can fully appreciate *The Portrait* only, knowing these things. . . . Meanwhile all of Rossetti's friends had become or were becoming famous,—Morris, Swinburne, and others;—he remained unknown, save as a

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

painter of wonderful canvases like *Dante's Dream*. He had voluntarily sacrificed his literary life upon the altar of his love; and he had human weakness enough to regret the vow. The creations of true genius, engendered by the emotion of the moment, are, once lost, lost forever;—they can no more be reproduced than the tones of a dead voice, or the expression of a face that the sun will never again illumine. But those poems were not wholly lost;—they might be recovered at the cost of a little self-humiliation. Friends had encouraged him to such a step—men who fully understood his character, and compassionated his weakness. He resolved at last; but the violation of his promise to the dead brought its own punishment. There were dreadful formalities to be gone through, permits to be obtained, explanations to be made,—and that even to the Home Secretary. At the last moment, had he been acting alone, Rossetti would have been glad to abandon the project,—and at a future day would no doubt have reproached himself as much for its abandonment as he already reproached himself for breaking the sleep of his beloved. But others were acting for him; and it was too late, luckily, for any sensitive protests or outcries. . . . She was found still as if asleep, perfect and beautiful

SOME HUMAN FRAILTY

as marble, with her cheek pillowed on the little gift they were about to take away from her.

. . . Seven editions of the book were sold within a very short time after its appearance! Would it have been better to have left the MS. with the dead? In the eternal whirl of universes and changes, what is the significance of one solitary love, one individual agony?—nay, what is the importance of a race or of a world? might be asked. Still, we fancy, only the pessimist could ask the question. As in the physical world we accept the doctrine of conservation of forces,—so in the moral world also may we not believe there is a corresponding and divine law of conservation, by which all beautiful thoughts and feelings are rewarded with immortality upon sole condition of being communicated to mankind,—and that these will endure, metamorphosed, indeed, but undiminished in eternal value, even when the heart of the last man shall have ceased to beat?

. . . Surely Rossetti's weakness was rather in the vow itself, than in its violation.

TENNYSON'S *LOCKSLEY HALL*

When Tennyson's eighth volume appeared in 1885 under the title of *Tiresias and other Poems*, many writers expressed their disappointment. Some ventured even to utter the opinion that the old poet's force was visibly on the wane,—that his day of creative power was past. How much right to express disappointment or to utter adverse criticism the book itself justified, is not easy to discern. Perhaps both sentiments were evoked largely by the disillusion inevitable to all anticipation of an irrational or exaggerated character. Men had become so accustomed to regard Tennyson as the greatest master of language who ever lived, that they might have expected impossibilities; or, again, they had become so familiar with his magnificence, that it had grown to be a part of their intellectual life, and had partially prepared them for something beyond even the power of the magician,—a sublimer music to be evolved only in future centuries. Furthermore, it must be confessed that various pieces composing the volume *Tiresias* might have seemed to suffer by comparison with previous compositions of the Mas-

LOCKSLEY HALL

ter. *Balin and Balan* does not appear to possess the melodious witchcraft of the elder Idyls; the *Charge of the Heavy Brigade* did not fling fire into English veins, as did the swinging rhythm and flash of the better-known and earlier poem to which it forms the companion piece; and the antique beauty of *Tiresias* seemed colder to those who have learned by heart the sublime soliloquies of *Ulysses* and *Tithonus*. The truth may be that in losing the power of adding *novelty* to the impression produced,—a power every master must lose more or less quickly according to the rapidity and extent of his success,—Tennyson also lost the ability to call forth such extraordinary enthusiasm as he evoked in other years. And yet in *Tiresias* there was some novelty too,—a totally fresh form of verse,—in the matchless *Ode to Virgil*, majestic as an ocean-roll, astounding in its nobleness of imagery.

With the appearance of Tennyson's ninth and last volume, *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, we hear the same expressions of disappointment, the same declarations that the great Eagle of the poetical heaven is losing his power of high soaring. Perhaps the fault-finding is no more rational in 1887 than it was in 1886. This time Tennyson makes his appearance in prose as well as verse: a prose drama entitled *The Promise of May*, and

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

mostly written in that Northern English dialect which the poet uses so well, occupies no less than 150 pages of the volume, and contains only a few brief interludes of blank verse. Besides *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, there are only two other poems: that on the Indian and Colonial Exhibition Opening, with its much parodied refrain of "Britons, hold your own!"—and that on the Fleet, which has been unjustly ridiculed by American wits. It was a patriotic cry, uttered with immense effect at the moment of a political crisis,—well calculated to stir British love of home and country,—and infinitely stronger in its way than many a bombastic appeal to French patriotism by Victor Hugo. As Tennyson himself says, on page 169 of *Tiresias*:

—Here the Singer for his Art
Not all in vain may plead
"The song that nerves a nation's heart
Is in itself a deed."

He has changed and amended the little poem considerably—made it more perfect, perhaps, in workmanship; perhaps, also a trifle less spirited. Is it possible that a poet may sometimes thus weaken his masterpieces? We notice, in the definitive edition of Tennyson, that the famous

LOCKSLEY HALL

line opening his translation from the eighth book of the *Iliad*—

So Hector spake; and sea-like roared his host,—

has been changed to—

So Hector spake; the Trojans roared applause.

More faithful, perhaps, to the original, which has been rendered into prose thus in the scholarly version of Butcher and Lang: "*So Hector made harangue; and the Trojans clamored applause.*"

But who will not regret the lost power of the first Tennysonian rendering?

The great feature of the new book is *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*; and the poem seems to have lost by the process of transmission when telegraphed to the American press. Certainly with the rich paper and the admirable typography of the Edinburgh printers, the long lines appear now to take a brighter color, and to hold a clearer significance. We venture to surmise that with time the first hasty verdict upon this remarkable poem will be very largely changed, if not absolutely reversed. The theme of the first *Locksley Hall* was one more suited to popular feeling; but it would probably be as unjust to attribute all the sentiments of the second *Locksley Hall* to purely personal feeling, as to call the

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

love-episode of the first a real passage in the poet's life. Nevertheless, we have good glimpses of Tennyson's opinions in both. Those opinions, however, we believe to have been modified for artistic ends, and placed in the mouths of characters who must not be too closely identified with the singer. We find repetitions, weaknesses, platitudes, in the second poem, which have no parallel in the first; but are not these introduced purposely? The speaker is supposed to be an old man of eighty, whose mind wanders occasionally in the middle of his discourse: we have a positive proof of this in the passage where, after mentioning the moon in an astronomical digression, the old lord of Locksley Hall suddenly goes back to the subject of a moonlight meeting sixty years before., The second *Locksley Hall* poem may not enrich English literature with so many proverbial quotations and bits of domestic philosophy as did its predecessor,—yet we have lines like these:—

‘ Youthful!—youth and age are scholars yet but in a lower
school,
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved himself a
fool;—

LOCKSLEY HALL

that will be remembered. And where has Tennyson spoken more grandly or melodiously than in these fresh verses touching upon the question of the plurality of worlds, the littleness of man, and the awfulness of the Creative Being:—

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendor, or in
Mars,
We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of the evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and madness,
lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of peaceful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp our hands and murmur, "Would to God that we were there?"

.
All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword "Evolution" here.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the King of
sacred song;
Insects of an hour that hourly work their brother-insects
wrong,—

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their fiery
way,—
All their planets whirling round them,—flash a million
miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded Earth before her highest, man,
was born;
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless and
forlorn.

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt and
plots of land—
Shadow skins of green and azure—chains of mountains,
grains of sand.

Only That which made us meant us to be mightier by
' and by.
' Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within the
human eye,—

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro' the hu-
man soul,
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward, in
the Whole.

LOCKSLEY HALL

Tennyson has often a kindly word for evolution; and in the second *Locksley Hall*, as in many a previous poem, shows that he had given large attention to the scientific questions and developments of his day. If the speaker of *Locksley Hall* cries out against Demos, and false philosophy, and certain radicalisms of the era, he feels the beauty and the consolation of modern scientific hopes for the future; he does not ridicule the dream of a more perfect world and a higher manhood to come, but robes the happy fancy in his most luminous and beautiful verse. He asks, if humanity at last may not find:—

•

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms and
Republics fall,—
Something kindlier, higher, holier,—all for each, and
each for all?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love,
and Truth;
All the millions one at length, with all the visions of my •
youth?

All diseases quenched by Science—no man halt or deaf
or blind; •
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger
mind?

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single
tongue,—

I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so
young?—

Every tiger-madness muzzled, every serpent-passion
killed,

Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert tilled,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole, she smiles,
Universal oceans softly washing all her warless isles.

So far he is in accordance with the World's
Greatest Philosopher; and it is rather to be re-
gretted that he has failed to follow him further.
He, or at least the Lord of *Locksley Hall*,
seems to agree with Moltke's belief in the eternal
necessity, or eternal inevitability, of war:—

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her thou-
sands millions, then—

All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy warless
men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever? late
or soon?

Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead world
the Moon?

It will be observed that he predicts the ulti-
mate condition as one in which the pressure of
population will continue, and the means of sub-

LOCKSLEY HALL

sistence, although vastly increased, still prove insufficient. This is not, however, the belief of the new philosophy, which holds that as human intelligence develops, human fertility will decrease and the pressure of population become a thing of the past. For example, Herbert Spencer tells us:—

. . . "It is manifest that in the end pressure of population and its accompanying evils will disappear, and will leave a state of things requiring from each individual no more than a normal and pleasurable activity. . . . Excess of fertility has itself rendered the process of civilization inevitable; and the process of civilization must inevitably diminish fertility, and at last destroy its excess. From the beginning pressure of population has been the proximate cause of progress. It produced the original diffusion of the race. It compelled men to abandon predatory habits and take to agriculture. It led to the clearing of the Earth's surface. It forced men into the social state; made social organization inevitable; and has developed the social sentiments. It has stimulated to progressive improvements in production, and to increased skill and intelligence. It is daily thrusting us into closer contact and more mutually-dependent relationships. And after having caused, as it ultimately must, the due peopling of the globe, and the raising of all its habitable parts into the highest state of culture,—after having brought all processes for the satisfaction of

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

human wants to perfection,—after having, at the same time, developed the intellect into complete competency for its work, and the feelings into complete fitness for social life,—after having done all this, the pressure of population, as it gradually finishes its work, must gradually bring itself to an end.”—SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY: *Principles of Biology*, Vol. II, §376.

And an equally cheering view of the remote future might be obtained from the chapter on Equilibration in Spencer's *First Principles*,—the introductory volume of the series. Tennyson would have therefore found excellent justification for making the dream a little brighter. And the scientific philosophy of our time harmonizes, in more than one point, with that exquisite creed which Browning puts into the mouth of his *Abt Vogler*:—

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall
exist ;—

Not its semblance, but *itself*: no beauty, nor good, nor
power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist,

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high,—the heroic for earth
too hard,—

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
sky,—

LOCKSLEY HALL

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard:—
Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it by
and by.

Yet Tennyson's poem is not the less admirable because some of its conclusions are unacceptable to a special class of thinkers, or some of its severities distasteful to champions of creeds or advocates of castes: there is a ring of power through it,—a ring that may tremble at moments, like the old man's voice, but like the voice of an old man who has been a giant,—imposing in its sonority. When he blasts Zolaism in one line; when he cries out in horror against the vices of great cities, and the crimes of great men, he pleases less than when he speaks of the things which are the poet's own,—the things which are eternal. Baudelaire has beautifully compared the poet to the albatross,—unable to walk without difficulty when compelled to remain upon the ground, because of the vastness of its wings. Tennyson's muse never totters; but when she leaves the highest heights to contemplate the lowest phases of life, she is less lithe of motion, less gracious, less bewitching;—those giant-wings of hers, made broad for heaven, weigh her down when she treads the common soil.

HENRI HEINE'S WIFE

One of the most singular of the many volumes of memoirs which have made their appearance in Paris during the last few months, but one which has yet obtained little recognition in this country, is Alexander Weill's *Souvenirs Intimes de Henri Heine*. This Weill is an Alsation Jew; and the book would be interesting from this fact alone; for it is well worth while to observe how the great lyric poet,—who although a Jew himself, spoke of Judaism as “a misfortune,” and mocked the people of his race with Voltairean jeers,—is judged by a fellow-Israelite.

The book is less of a judgment, however, than of a revelation;—there are perhaps less than twenty-five pages of commentary out of a total of 144—most of which are devoted to personal reminiscences. Whatever observation is made upon Heine's moral or immoral character is more than amply borne out by statements of fact, by anecdotes too characteristic to savor of fabrication, too eccentric not to be true. On the whole, the impression created by the book is one of kindly feeling to its subject; but the life and character of the poet need not be dwelt especially

HENRI HEINE'S WIFE

upon in this article. Our readers will be more interested in a review of some new facts which M. Weill has ventured to make public. These facts relate quite as much to Madame Heine as to her husband,—constituting, indeed, a sort of more or less scandalous chronicle of their married life.

The popular idea about Heine's career is that he suffered from lack of appreciation,—that his early death was largely due to privation,—to the want of those comforts which might have enabled him to repair a constitution broken down by Bohemian excesses of all kinds. The truth appears to be that Heine might have lived very comfortably had he so desired. The great poet Schiller was happy with a revenue of 300 thalers;—but he lived according to his means, and his wife kept house and cooked for him. Heine had a revenue which would have satisfied most poets. First he had a life annuity of 1000 marks from the Hamburg publisher, Herr Campe;—and he had a salary of at least 3000 francs from the *Augsburg Gazette*. Then he had also a pension from Louis Phillippe of 6000 francs a year; and one from his uncle of 6000—increased to 8000 during the last long illness of the poet. This represents a total income which could scarcely have ever fallen below, say \$3000 a year in American

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

money. But Heine wanted to live like an aristocrat,—and that at Paris! He lived even more recklessly, if less eccentrically than Baudelaire. He visited fashionable watering-places in summer, and lavished money upon women and upon banqueting in winter. “It was a Bohemian household,” says Weill,—“where *Haute-Sauterne* was the regular table-wine (Heine’s favorite wine), and where champagne (Mathilde’s favorite wine) was always drunk at dessert. . . . Heine had no conception of order and system; and Mathilde double-discounted him in the matter of disorder and inability to keep house. Henri could never keep accounts; and Mathilde did not even know how to make an omelette.”

Starving upon three thousand dollars a year was a condition of affairs which Heine’s stern Jewish family could not be expected to understand, and for their non-comprehension of which we cannot help fancying that Mr. Weill had little right to blame them. Moreover they had no taste for poetry—certainly not for the poetry of Heine which was not less remarkable for its Voltaireanism than for its beauties of pathos or melody. Solomon, the rich uncle, was a pillar of Hebrew orthodoxy,—an extremist, perhaps in his views—who believed that mere study of

HENRI HEINE'S WIFE

books should be confined to the study of Thora and the Talmud, and who also believed in the old Talmudic prohibition to make one's living by such study. In those days most of the celebrated rabbis did not depend upon their sacred office for a living: many of them were merchants or tradesmen. As for poetry and song, they considered the Bible contained all of these which a devout man should care to know; and the fame of Heine in his own country filled them with shame rather than pride. Theirs was such a feeling as a good clergyman might experience who should hear that his son had become a play-actor. When Heine brought his first printed volume to this terrible uncle, the old man knitted his bushy eyebrows and exclaimed: "*Ah, ha! now you see the consequences! . . . if you had tried to learn something useful, you would not have to be making books!*" Old Solomon probably spoke more kindly than he felt; the making of such books must have seemed to his religious mind even more sinful than it was useless. What then must he have thought on hearing afterward that his Bohemian nephew had abandoned the faith, and allowed himself to be baptized! Is it so wonderful, after all, that although worth some thirty millions, Solomon should have cut off his prodigal nephew with a

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

pitiful legacy of 16,000 francs?—or that Charles Heine, who died worth sixty-seven millions, should only have allowed the sick poet 2000 francs in addition to the former annuity of 6000, which had been obtained chiefly by menaces of poetic vengeance?

The Hamburg banker had no reason to be satisfied with his nephews. Henri, whose education had been paid for by Solomon, was not the only apostate in the family. He had two brothers also renegades, of whom he never spoke,—one professing Greek Catholicism and holding a position in Russia; the other, baptized a Lutheran, editing a newspaper at Vienna. Journalism led Heine into the gates of Protestantism:—as a Jew, in Germany, he could not be an editor however rare his ability. His great political rival, Boerne, also a Jew, was obliged to get baptized before he could edit his famous paper—*The Balance*., Naturally, such “conversions” could not be seriously regarded by liberal-minded friends; but they were disgraceful and criminal in the eyes of the truly orthodox. Heine himself mocked his conversion, just as he mocked everything terrestrial or extra-terrestrial: heaven or hell, saints or angels, wisdom and folly, love or hatred. At times, however, he spoke seriously upon the subject:—“One does not,” he said,

HENRI HEINE'S WIFE

"change one's religion;—I am *baptized*, but I am not *converted*. . . . I have entered into the fortress only that I may the better be able to aid in its demolition." The apology was probably sincere; but the result of the step was not at all favorable to Heine in the end, and one feels inclined to agree with Weill, that Heine's professed change of religion might be compared to substituting garlic for onions.

The evil genius of Heine, according to this biographer, was Mathilde. However reckless a man may be in his amours,—however cynical in his relations with the other sex,—sooner or later he is likely to encounter some woman who fully avenges all the wrongs of the rest. Heine found her in the person of a girl employed as saleswoman in a glove store. Her extraordinary beauty fascinated him, and he exercised all his arts of persuasion for many long months before he could induce her to receive his advances favorably. Had Mathilde been a sensitive, romantic, emotional being the liaison might have ended very unhappily for her. But Heine met more than his match. Blonde, tall, strong as most men, she had the beauty of marble—and the coldness thereof. Heine found himself married, and married very fast indeed, almost before he believed such a thing possible. Mathilde's mastery

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

of the man was never broken. However whimsical Heine might choose to be, he found Mathilde much more irrational than himself; and his own pettishness and irritability were fairly cowed out of him by a woman whose temperament was far more violent than his own. Nevertheless, she was just sufficiently affectionate to make him love her foolishly, and so much above reproach that even in Paris none could cast a stone at her.

She was not twenty when Heine first brought her to his home, and must have been extraordinary attractive, for Weill, who bears her great ill-will, declares she might have posed for that famous statue of Phyrne in the Fine-Arts Academy at Madrid, "If," he says, "mere plastic beauty can be perfect without refinement, Mathilde was perfection itself. She was chiseled marble. Her teeth were more comely than the fairest pearls of Ophir; and like all women who have pretty teeth, she smiled continually—the more so, perhaps, because she knew that every time she smiled there came a little dimple to either cheek. Her voice had a ring as argentine as that of a joy bell. She never wore anything false, never used powder or rouge; she never had even a boudoir to make her toilet in. Her eyes were brown; her hair dark curling chestnut, which she wore tolerably short. Her only

HENRI HEINE'S WIFE

physical defect was that her forehead had not the antique height and breadth, it was oval—the forehead of a child, indicating little reflection, little reasoning power, but great obstinacy of purpose.”

How much Mathilde loved Heine it is hard to say, according to Alexander Weill's testimony. Her attachment may have been largely selfish; it may have been purely sincere. But it seems certain that, although she could impose her strong will upon the fantastic man, she could not make herself a pleasant companion for him. She was comparatively ignorant, uneducated, without æsthetic or literary tastes of any sort,—could never understand her husband's greatness,—and knew nothing of German except, *Ich bin eine wilde kalze*,—"I am a wildcat,"—which Heine taught her. Indeed, he always treated her as a sort of beautiful feline pet, which must be humored upon all occasions because dangerous to irritate. But how Heine loved her, is well known to those who have read his poems,—especially that terrible *Book of Lazarus*, in which he cries out:

“The gardens of heaven, the gardens of paradise, do not attract me;—I will never find women there more beautiful than those I have seen on earth. •

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

"There is no angel, however fine her wings, who could replace my wife for me.

"Never will the noise of the world weary me, for I love to remain at home with my wife. . . . My soul drinks in with delight the music of her charming voice; —her gaze is so sweet, so true. . . ."

Weill, however, attributes to Mathilde's jealousies and whims all those eccentric actions by which Heine estranged his best friends,—or even made enemies of those who wished to do him good. One thing is tolerably certain,—that the visit of Mathilde to Hamburg did Heine harm. The girl's beauty alone had little effect upon the austere Solomon; and her saucy airs, her jeering laugh, her Parisian-grisette mockery of old-fashioned manners and customs, must have made them look upon her as a veritable Jezebel. Perhaps had Mathilde laughed a little less, and prayed a little more, old Solomon might have resolved to do something generous for his nephew.

Weill's book, frank as it appears to be, must nevertheless have been written in a slightly revengeful spirit; Mathilde had effected a rupture in his relations with the poet. The cause of her anger may have been contemptibly trifling,

HENRI HEINE'S WIFE

but the result was very serious. She carried a certain Potiphar's-wife story to Heine, which compelled Alexander Weill to flee like Joseph. Heine used, when well enough, to beat his wife regularly—perhaps because she wanted to be chastised, just as a Russian woman considers beating a proof of affection;—but he always sided with her against the rest of the world. Weill never dared to show himself at the house again; and the poet was in his grave fifteen months later. At the time of the scandal he was paralyzed,—unable to move from his chair,—unable to open his eyes except by forcibly parting the eyelids with his finger, which he often did with the mocking words: *Permit me to lift the curtain of my eye, that I may gaze upon your face.*

After his death Mathilde lingered in Paris for some time. She had inherited some annuity which was regularly paid her by the poet's publishers; and she sold her husband's memoirs to some Parisian *editeurs*, but it was found necessary to destroy these. The widow of Charles Heine also seems to have assisted her. Beautiful as she was, it would have been easy for her to have married a rich man; but, so far as is known, she remained strictly faithful to Heine's memory. For several years she was seen, at

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

intervals, walking in some public square or park, meditatively—always accompanied by two white dogs. At last she disappeared altogether from view. Her fate seems to be a mystery, even in omniscient Paris;—whether she sought a new home in her husband's fatherland, or whether she passed away to that vaster fatherland, in which Heine seems—despite all his bitter mockery and satanic laughter,—to have had some dim belief,—we do not know.

There is one moral in this very singular book which is worth more consideration than we give it,—viz: that really great men are seldom miserable except through their own fault. Heine was fully appreciated in his lifetime, and earned enough to make himself comfortable. We know now that Poe, that De Musset, that Baudelaire, that De Nerval, that Theophile Gautier and many other men of genius were only poor by reason of their own extravagances or expensive follies. Had Solomon Heine bequeathed a million dollars to Henri Heine,—would the result have been beneficial to the poet? Weill believes that it would. Nevertheless from what he himself has just revealed to us concerning the vices, the luxurious follies, the Sardinian proclivities of Heine,—and the childish extravagances of the woman who was his idol,—

HENRI HEINE'S WIFE

his god,—we feel compelled to draw a very different inference. Money would not have changed Heine's Bohemian habits;—on the contrary its possession would only have enabled him to indulge in orgies and irregularities of the most extravagant kind. If he could starve on \$3000 per annum, he could also have starved upon \$300,000; and the wealth would soon have been dissipated. He might indeed have written a little more poetry under such circumstances; but there is good reason to believe that his best work was done long before the death of the Hamburg banker. . . . And one feels inclined to suspect, after all, that the grim old Jew was right!

MORE NOTES ON HEINE

Two interesting articles concerning the life and work of Heine have recently appeared—almost simultaneously,—in the *Paris Figaro*, and in the *Revue Politique et Littéraire*. The first mentioned is from the pen of Alexander Weill, à Jew, and a personal friend of the poet: the same jocose, cynical, gossipy Weill, who gave the world, two or three years ago, a volume of curious and amusing memoirs concerning the private life of the poet. And Weill has always something novel and eccentric to tell. This time he gives us several bits of curious information regarding Heine's disputes with his own relatives, and the undying rancor which he provoked against himself by his terrible gift of sarcasm.

Heine had two brothers and a sister, Mme. Charlotte Emden Heine, who still lives at Hamburg, after reaching the venerable age of eighty-four. One of the brothers died in the service of the Russian government; the recent death of the other, Baron Gustave Heine von Geldern, in Vienna, at the age of seventy-eight, probably inspired Weill's article by calling fresh attention to the name made illustrious by Henri's

MORE NOTES ON HEINE

genius. Of this Gustave we learn some curious facts, which exhibit the immense difference in the character of the brothers,—all of whom started out in life equally poor. Henri Heine died in want and debt; but Gustave died a millionaire; and the third brother, who was employed by the Russian government, was on the high road to great wealth when death overtook him. It has often been imagined that Heine's relatives despised literature and journalism; but this statement needs considerable qualification.

Writing for glory, for mere love of art, under the sole impulse of a real or fancied inspiration, was no doubt a waste of time and talent in the opinion of the Heines. Nothing, indeed, could be more characteristic of family ideas in this respect than the observation of Solomon Heine, on being presented with a copy of his naughty nephew's first book of poems:—"*Now you see, —if you had only learned to do something, you would not be having to write books.*" But in the opinion of the Heines, there were two kinds of literature and two kinds of journalism. Gustave Heine became a journalist! In 1845 he established a little newspaper at Vienna called the *Fremdenblatt*,—containing simply the names of all strangers arriving in the city: a sort of hotel-register-publication. It paid enough to cover

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

expenses; and he enlarged it, adding a column of court-news and a supplement devoted to cheap advertising. Gradually he found means to give his court-news a semi-official character, wrote editorials in support of government policy, obtained the good will of the Foreign Office, obtained the title of baron for "extraordinary services," and actually succeeded at last in having his journal publicly announced as the official organ of the Austrian government. He was not much of a writer himself; but he knew how to choose his editors; and he always remained sole proprietor of the sheet. It cost only about 100 florines an issue; but the time came when he could demand his own price for advertising; and the *Fremdenblatt* made him immensely rich. He used to say: "With all his genius, my brother Henri could never write an article to suit my paper." And he was right. Heine had genius enough to have caused the total suppression of the *Fremdenblatt* by the publication therein of a single poem, or a single sarcastic letter; but he could never have aided in making it a remunerative investment. His genius was largely of the iconoclastic sort. His power of satire wrought him incalculable injury; and alienated from him many who would otherwise have been glad to aid him. For example, he had

MORE NOTES ON HEINE

savagely satirized the Fould Brothers, relatives by marriage, in the *Augsburg Gazette*; and when Weill, long years after, went to the Foulds and petitioned them to aid the starving poet, the reply showed that Heine's bitter words had not been forgotten:—"Never utter that fellow's name in our presence. Let him die! It will be a good riddance!" And when it is remembered how the young Jewish singer mocked the faith of his fathers, the manners of his people, the failings of his relatives,—how he dipped his pen in revolutionary ink, and bespattered therewith the family name,—it is almost surprising that his uncle should have bequeathed him even \$3000.

Still it does not seem that Heine was ever very badly off except through his own fault. He had \$1200 a year allowed him by his cousin Charles, from 1848,—afterward increased to \$1600; he had \$1200 annually from the *Augsburg Gazette*; he had about \$750 income from the sale of his books; and for a considerable time he actually received from Louis Philippe a subvention of about \$1200 per annum. For Heine changed his politics as often as he changed his religion; and with just as little sincerity of purpose. With an assurance of an income of between \$3000 and \$4000, Heine ought to have been able to live well, even in Paris. But,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

unfortunately, he lived at more than double the figure of his revenue;—he dressed his Parisian wife extravagantly, drank torrents of Sauterne and champagne, gave luxurious dinners to his friends, and suppers that resembled imperial banquets. Now these things could not fail to become known to the poet's family; and it is only just to suppose they would argue that money given to such a prodigal would certainly be money thrown away. Charles Heine might have been worth sixty-nine millions of francs; but was it not perfectly reasonable for him to suppose that a pension of 6000 francs to his cousin Henri, would do the latter as much good as a pension of 60,000? Lampooning his relatives, and then begging their aid; figuring as a republican, and nevertheless accepting secret pensions from the monarchy; ridiculing all religions and professing to be a convert; wasting his substance in riotous living and much of his genius in diatribes—the erratic young Henri must have seemed to the staid and thrifty members of his family a very Absalom, beyond hope of redemption, and even unworthy of mourning. Long after his death the terror of his unpublished MSS. remained to annoy them; and Baron Gustave Heine traveled to Paris expressly for the purpose of securing and destroying his brother's unedited autobiography. In

MORE NOTES ON HEINE

this he was probably successful,—purchasing from Mathilde, the poet's wife, leaf by leaf, every atom of writing in her possession touching the dead author's family history.

The article in the *Revue*, by J. Bourdeau, is less interesting as a comparative study of the two Romantic movements in France and in Germany, than as containing an epitome of modern German criticisms unfavorable to Heine. Perhaps Anti-Semitic feeling has had much to do with these critiques. Professor Scherer of Berlin, a noted authority on German literature,—calls Heine a mere imitator, with no talent except the talent of imitation,—an imitator of the *Minnelieder*—an imitator of Schenkendorf, of Uhland, of Kerner, of Byron, of Brentano, above all. Herr Treitschke, author of a history of Germany in the nineteenth century, says of Heine,—“Intelligent without depth, witty without conviction, selfish, sensual, underhand and sometimes nevertheless irresistibly amiable,—as a poet he was without character, and in consequence remarkably unequal in the quality of his productions.” Strange to say, Hartmann, the Pessimist, figures as one of Heine's harshest critics. The most noteworthy denunciation, from a literary standpoint, is of course Professor Scherer's; ~~but~~ it actually amounts to nothing more than a close analysis of

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

the poet's methods. Imitation is not a word which can explain talent; but it is an accusation which may be leveled at the highest modern creative power with some superficial show of argument,—the sculptor, the painter, the poet, are all to a certain extent imitators, since progress in literature and in all art involves the preservation and renovation and expansion of the beauties of the Past. The Arts of the present are but more perfected forms of what other generations admired; the Art of the future can only be an evolution from the present.

DR. MERCIER ON DANTE

The last number of the *Comptes-rendus de l'Athénée Louisianais* comes to us with an essay upon Dante by Doctor Alfred Mercier. The sight of the Doctor's name upon the tinted cover of this welcome little periodical invariably excites pleasant anticipations which are invariably fulfilled;—for whether Dr. Mercier discusses a scientific phenomenon, a linguistic theme, or some unfamiliar phase of old Creole life, his production is sure to charm, not merely by that easy grace of style which always marks his creations, but especially by an originality as unexpected as it is pleasing.

In this instance, however, one could scarcely have ventured to expect much real originality. The choice of the theme itself was daring,—a theme to which the greatest masters of literary analysis have been devoting their best work for centuries. The Doctor refers to some three hundred works written upon Dante;—but if the estimate be extended beyond the confines of English, French, and Italian, three thousand works would scarcely make up the mighty bibliography. How many books have been written about Shake-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

speare! Yet, until within our own times, Dante was more widely read and studied. It is almost rash in these days to attempt a new criticism of either great poet; and nevertheless Dr. Mercier's beautiful little essay represents a thoroughly successful attempt of the kind. Of course there is not much left to be said concerning the mere workmanship of the *Divina Commedia*; and upon this our Creole essayist wisely remained silent. He has devoted his study principally to the consideration of the most immortal part of the trilogy,—the soul of it,—the fire that will never die,—that passionate inspiration which is eternal and eternally young. The story of Dante's mystic love can never become old, never have its tender interest exhausted by criticism;—it will touch humanity so long as humanity endures, so long as idealism prevails. "The need of an ideal," as the writer tells us, "is the loftiest privilege of the human race. The thirst for beauty, perfect, absolute, free from all material admixture, is assuredly a natural aspiration in man, since it is developed spontaneously in the literatures of nations totally strange to each other, and speaking different languages." It is, then, the consideration of this aspiration, as manifested in Dante's work, which the essayist attempts so creditably.

The fact that Dante possessed a twofold

DR. MERCIER ON DANTE

nature,—or at least a nature developed by antagonistic influences;—loving, chivalrous, and generous on the one hand; austere, timid, and superstitious upon the other,—is very well touched upon by Dr. Mercier. Not, however, as a discovery! The influence of medieval ideas upon Dante has been well studied out by many writers; but in order to fully comprehend the history of Dante's love for Beatrice, and its literary consequences, the character of this double life,—this dual consciousness, must be made apparent. It is after these introductory considerations that the essay becomes especially interesting. After knowing the man, and his environments, and the influences which developed his fashion of thought, then the enigma of that wondrous song is well interpreted.

It would be superfluous, if not tedious, to recapitulate here the traditions of Dante's real life. It is delightful, however, to follow Dr. Mercier's psychological explanation of them, and to observe his artistic unraveling of the heart-theme that may be traced like a continuous thread of rainbow light even through all the monstrous tapestries of the *Inferno*, and through the gloaming-pallor of the *Purgatorio*-scapes, to be lost at last in the brightness of the closing vision. What an admirable little preface Dr. Mercier's paper would

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

form for a popular edition of Dante! One fancies that he knows the heart of the poet after reading it; and perhaps, indeed, we do know him far more intimately to-day than did the men of his native city.

We see Dante, first, as a child, in love with a child—little Beatrice, who, even in her ninth year, gave promise of that marvelous beauty which inspired one of the loftiest passions the world has ever known. The impressions of a first love are eternal, ineffaceable;—till the moment of his death the recollection of that first meeting was never obliterated from the memory of the poet. Time, indeed, only expanded its exquisiteness, etherealized it, divinized it, illumined it with the luminosity of heaven. Growing up to manhood, Dante manifested qualities worthy of his fine, strong Roman face,—the qualities of the soldier and the senator; but the manifestation of his love never lessened. The marriage of his divinity was a terrible torture to him;—scarcely as great an agony, however, as the knowledge that he had momentarily lost her esteem. Death intervened to render an explanation impossible. This is perhaps the bitterest of all bitterness,—to know that a wrong can never be atoned for,—that a pardon can never be asked for,—that the eyes we look for have ceased to see, the ears we would

DR. MERCIER ON DANTE

speaking to have ceased forever to hear. Religion, the great consoler, could alone offer consolation to Dante. Religion was indeed the spirit that guided him through the eternities and darknesses to seek his beloved, as Orpheus sought Eurydice. To religion therefore, he turned. Marriage had not bettered his condition, but rather added a crown of sorrows to his grief. He dreamed of but one thing,—erecting a monument of song, more enduring than brass, more imposing than ever was marble mausoleum, to the Shade of her whom he had loved and lost. Then was the *Divina Commedia* created, under the fancied inspiration of that beloved ghost, whose form hovers above all the abysses of gloom, all the eternities of splendor. With the progress of the giant work, this tender fancy grew to be a part of Dante's inner life. He believed in Beatrice even as he believed in God,—nay, she appeared to him only as the sweetest of all God's manifestations; and the dream of her became sanctified in his heart by faith,—even as by faith became sanctified and purified, like gold in the furnace, the wondrous Song of Solomon. The loveliness of Beatrice appeared to him only as a symbol of the loveliness that is infinite—the holiness of pulchritude; and awful, as the beauty of gods,—so awful as to terrify the worshiper. Thus ter-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

rified do we behold him, in that apocalyptic canto of *Purgatorio* where the beloved Shape appears to him, not as a vapory phantasm, but radiant with eternal majesty, and approaching, in blinding glory of star-fires,—heralded by many-colored lightnings, and by celestial thunders. “In all European literature,” says our essayist, “never did Genius and Art, uniting their riches, produce aught so splendid as this *entrée en scene* of Beatrice.” The statement could be qualified only by an appeal to Tennyson’s word-magic, or to the magnificence of Ezekiel and John the Divine. The boy’s dream had expanded to the stars;—it had become an Ocean of Light, lapping about the throne of heaven. And so blended with divinity had the Vision become, that the speech of Beatrice identifies itself with the Voice of Pure Faith. Her reproof reveals all the metamorphosis of the poet’s love. Doubtless he had questioned himself a million times why Nature was so cruel,—for what had Beatrice been created,—with what hidden purpose had such a comeliness been formed, that it should have so soon been sentenced to the dust? Only faith could frame the strange answer! The beauty of Beatrice was only a passing revelation—a revelation of the beauty that is supreme, undying, divine, eternally young,—the beauty of holiness,

DR. MERCIER ON DANTE

the beauty of God! For this only was it formed; for this only was it ever vouchsafed to him to look upon it. And, his love thus purified by mysticism, he sang of it,—not as a bird sings, not as a poet sings, but as those sing whose number is twenty-and-four, and who are gathered in snowy choir upon that azure floor that is sprinkled with stars. . . .

This is the beautiful suggestion of Dr. Mercier's essay,—an essay that has done rare credit to the literary body among whose archives it has found an honored place.

PART IV
ORIENTAL LITERATURE

WHAT BUDDHISM IS

The largest attention given of recent years to the history of Oriental religions, and to the singular beauties of Oriental romance and poetry, has latterly begun to manifest such results in certain popular European and American literature, as have provoked some needless fear on the part of theologians that Buddhism might find successful apostles in the United States. To many austere persons the *Light of Asia* must have seemed a highly dangerous book, and the Dhammapada a subtle snare for the unwary; while the references of John Draper to Buddhism might have been deemed the strongest possible evidence of the great peril impending. These fears, however have been especially due to a misconception of the real theory and practice of Buddhism. That such misconception exists is made plain by various recent attempts to identify Buddhism with materialism, or by misrepresentations of it as a subtle species of infidelity which agnostics desire to propagate in Christian lands. This seems all the more strange in view of the fact that the leading authorities upon Buddhism and the history of its founder are mostly devout Christians, and sev-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

eral of them even missionaries, who hold a totally different opinion of the faith professed by *four hundred and seventy millions of people*, or more than one-third of the world's population.

To consider the subject of Buddhism at all comprehensively within the very limited confines of a magazine or newspaper article were really a hopeless task—as well attempt to fill the same space with an exhaustive review of Christianity. Moreover, although there exist in European languages alone enough works relating to the subject to occupy the greater part of the student's lifetime, the whole range of Buddhistic literature is yet far from having been covered by the researches of Oriental scholars.

Huge as Rabbinical literature is, it is a short treatise compared to the enormous literature of Buddhism, written in a score of different tongues, and preserved in the pagodas or monasteries of Thibet, of China, of Burmah, of Siam, of Japan, of Eastern Tartary. Four hundred and sixty-five different MSS. were found in the Island of Ceylon alone; more than a thousand different Buddhistic works are known by the title to have been translated from the Sanscrit into Chinese; but the multitude of Buddhistic volumes in the latter language is acknowledged to be almost incalculable. Until patient scholars shall have at

WHAT BUDDHISM IS

least obtained a knowledge of the full range of Buddhistic literature, many matters concerning the religion* of Sakya-Mouni must remain obscure. Finally, let it be observed that the difficulty of defining the nature of Buddhism with any degree of precision is vastly increased by the multitude of Buddhistic sects and schisms which far outnumber the various denominations of Christianity. Even within a century after Buddha's death there were sixteen great schisms.

Out of the almost unfathomable ocean of Buddhistic literature, the scholars of the nineteenth century have obtained comparatively few pearls; but some of these are exquisite and above price. Most wonderful of all is the legend of Gotama himself,—the story of the young Indian prince who spurned all that beauty, wealth, and rank could offer him to go forth as a preacher of what he believed to be the truth. This narrative, which has justly been termed "one of the most affecting histories humanity ever conceived" has been popularized by Edwin Arnold's beautiful verse. The parables and teachings of Buddha have also attracted many translators; and it is now believed, not without good reason, that no small portion of Old World folklore can be traced to a Buddhistic origin. A large number of metaphysical works have also been

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

translated; and from these especially it has been learned upon what philosophical foundation the Buddhistic dogmas rest. How utterly foreign to the spirit of American civilization,—and certainly to American materialism,—this philosophy is, the barest outline of its scheme, as accepted by all Buddhist sects, will suffice to show.

The Buddhist tells us that the first things we learn are the “Four Noble Truths.” These are—

1. The Existence of Pain. To live is to suffer.
2. The Cause of suffering is Desire.
3. The Cessation of pain is to be gained by the suppression of Desire.
4. Suppression of Desire is to be obtained by following the Good Law, as taught by Buddha, —through which observance Nirvana, or annihilation, is reached.

We have said annihilation; but it is still a vexed question whether Gotama regarded Nirvana as an utter extinction of being, or as a re-absorption of the soul into God, like a drop of water returning to the ocean whence it came. We do not know whether Nirvana always signified annihilation of the *Ego*,—as it seems to do to-day. A whole library of treatises have been written on this one point alone. We are also in

WHAT BUDDHISM IS

doubt as to the first preaching of Buddha concerning the *Skhandhas* or "aggregates of existence." According to some Buddhists every evil action aids to create another life, which the sinner enters after death;—according to others, the evil works do not reproduce the same being in another form, but a totally different *Ego*, the original passing utterly away. The accepted probability is that Buddha preached the former doctrine, according to which future transmigrations depend upon the actions of this life; the perfectly virtuous person being at last enabled to pass into Nirvana, or total extinction directly after death.

So far from being agnostic, however, the most celebrated formula of Buddhism, graven upon innumerable Indian monuments, shows its founder to have been absolutely dogmatic:—*"Whatever conditions proceed from a cause, the causes of them Tathagata hath proclaimed, and the obstruction of them, too, hath the great Sramana proclaimed."*

That to live is to suffer and that perfection lies in ceasing to exist, is scarcely a belief which could find either teachers or pupils in the United States;—and the materialists or agnostics of civilization would certainly refuse to accept the assertion that existence proceeds from corrup-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

tion, and corruption from desire, etc.,—and that we must avoid all desire to obtain the bliss of extinction. The Theory of Causes is variously given; some forms of it begin with the declaration that existence is the result of ignorance. The really wonderful pantheistic dogmas of Buddhism were borrowed from an older and—philosophically—sublimier creed, that of the Vedantic teachers; while the doctrine of transmigration (which has been said to harmonize symbolically with the evolutionary theories of our day) was preached before Buddha's birth. The Theory of Emanation and Absorption may be taught by Buddhists indeed; but it was known in Europe before Christianity; it has been taught in most civilized countries of the old world since civilization began; and it will doubtless continue to occupy human thought even when our own civilization shall be utterly forgotten, and when the last priest of Buddha shall have been in his grave many a thousand years.

But Buddhism, as a practical religion, is something as much opposed to agnosticism or even free thought, as any other faith. With its enormous hierarchy, its countless monasteries and convents and temples, its images of silver and gold, its pompous ceremonialism, its intricate ritual, its mendicant orders,—it constitutes an ecclesiastical

WHAT BUDDHISM IS

system in some countries much resembling the Christian Church of the Middle Ages; and has proved quite as aggressive too, when able to call the civil power to assist it in suppressing antagonistic creeds. It has no sympathy whatever with free thought.

RECENT BUDDHIST LITERATURE

"I remember the time when the name of Gautama, the Buddha, was scarcely known, except to a few scholars, and not always well spoken of by those who knew it; and now—he is second only to the One." These words, according to the testimony of Max Müller,—in his article on *Buddhistic Charity* in the last *North American Review*,—was uttered by no less an authority than the late Dean of Westminster . . . "a sign," continues Max Müller, "that our horizon is growing wider, and our hearts, I believe, growing larger and truer." Not the least proving proof of this expansion of our intellectual horizon is given by the ever-increasing popularity of the *Light of Asia*,—a work whose success has only been enhanced by such petty attacks upon it as the volume entitled *Edwin Arnold: Poet and Paganizer*. Arnold's beautiful book has been translated not only into many European, but also into many Eastern languages; and the number of editions rapidly exhausted encouraged Messrs. Trubner & Co., of London, to issue an illustrated edition of extraordinary interest and richness.

BUDDHIST LITERATURE

Those who comprehend the difficulties of illustrating a religious volume satisfactorily, and who appreciate the exquisite Orientalism of Mr. Arnold's poem, might, before actually inspecting this new edition, reasonably doubt the good judgment of the publishers. Unless the engravings surpass or surprise imagination, they are apt in a book of this sort to fall below it,—to belittle the pleasure of the reader by falsifying or dwarfing the conception. But, with admirable taste, the publishers have excluded all imaginative Occidental work, and selected only the most interesting designs in Buddhist archæology for reproduction by the engraver. These include ancient Indian bas-reliefs, friezes, statues, frescoes, coins, and rock-carvings about the holy places of Buddhist worship. Photographs and drawings have been lent for the purpose by the great historian of Oriental architecture, James Ferguson;—by Sir George Birdwood, author of the best work on Indian art;—by the Directors of the Calcutta Museum. Various designs have also been borrowed from standard volumes on Indian archæology,—among others from Foucaux's *Iconographie du Bouddha Cakya-Mouni*,—a valued treatise long out of print; but the majority of the illustrations are new. The head-pieces and the tail-pieces are all drawn from

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

Buddhist sculptures; even the initial letters are designed after Buddhist ornamentation, and interwrought with symbols of the Lotos or the Wheel. Some of these tail and head-pieces will astonish persons unfamiliar with the beauties of ancient Indian architecture. There are designs which not only rival the richest Corinthian marble carving, but which actually reproduce Greek forms,—such as the palm-leaf ornament on page 67, which, were it not alternated with the lotos-emblem, would seem to have been chiseled by the same hand that created the *antefixæ* of the Parthenon. The capital on page 42 suggests Corinthian fancy, and certainly parallels the crown of any Greek column in point of beauty;—it is as though some Hellenic fancy had been tropicalized by familiarity with Indian vegetation. In the sculptures and reliefs one does not, indeed, find figures of animals or of men idealized as by Greek genius; but the treatment of drapery is often admirable, the expression creditable, and the general character of the work cannot be denied great beauty. Occasionally the themes are touching, and the artist has shown his power of expressing pathos in stone; again it is weird, and no one can deny the strongly impressive character of the sculpture on page 51—

BUDDHIST LITERATURE

representing the dream of King Suddhodana. There is no wanton grace, as of a Bacchanal frieze, in these sculptured processions of Indian musicians and wrestlers; but they are dignified, attractive and complete with vigorous life.

The effect of the book is more than charming;—it is touching. The reader finds himself introduced to a strange and beautiful iconology,—to dead arts which owed their evolution to religious love,—the love of the Indian Christ. From the walls of forgotten palaces,—from stupas no longer visited by pious pilgrims,—from holy shrines made desolate by the fury of Arab and Mongol,—from the chambers of monasteries dowered by Kings like Asoka, and plundered by Moslem zealots,—the archæologists of India have been able to gather a complete artistic record of the life of Gautama, as it appears through these superb pages. Some of these sculptures are so vividly inspired by faith and hope that they affect one even to-day with the gentle enthusiasm which gave skill to that ancient chisel;—even when the figures border on grotesqueness there is something about them which commands respect. One cannot laugh at them any more than one could laugh at the medieval saints who pray in stained glass, or

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

those old Byzantine patriarchs who open enormous eyes in the ecclesiastical frescoes of the East.

The same Boston firm (Osgood) which offers this book to Arnold's American admirers, simultaneously presents the public with Beal's translation of the "*Si-yu-ki*,"—"Buddhist Records of the Western World"; and it is a good plan to read the text of these records in connection with the illustrations of the poem. They are the records of those pious Chinese pilgrims,—Fahian, Sung-Yun, and Hiuen-Tsiang,—who traveled on foot to India in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, to collect the relics and the written words of the Buddha for the faithful of the Yellow Empire. Hindostan was then the Palestine of Chinese Buddhism; and many of those temples and stupas and monasteries whose ruins furnish us with nearly all we know of Buddhist iconography, were still flourishing when such devoted men first made their way into the peninsula. It is very interesting, for example, after studying the engraving of *Nirvana* in the new edition of Arnold's poem, to read Hiuen-Tsiang's description, written more than a thousand years ago, of the very cave-temples at Ajanta where the drawings and photographs of the originals were made. The designs stamped

BUDDHIST LITERATURE

in gold upon the cover of *The Light of Asia*—taken from a bas-relief found at Sarnath,—representing the birth, life, and death of Gautama, were admired by Chinese eyes ten centuries before Europeans had visited India.

There is another feature about these engravings worthy of notice,—their illustration of Buddhist symbolism. Beside the interest attaching to such ancient sculpture and painting, as showing the manners and the fashions of past centuries, the mystical iconology of Buddhism here represented must attract the attention of all who have perused the *Romantic Legend*, translated by Beal, or Spence Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*, or the extraordinary work by E. Senart:—*Essai sur la legende du Buddha*, of which a definitive edition was published in 1882. M. Senart does not merely explain the emblems of Buddhism, as other writers have done; but he traces back their history to the era of primitive Aryan worship, in connection with his immense and somewhat audacious purpose. He has made the first and only satisfactory attempt to apply the philosophy of evolution to the history of a great faith, and supports his theory by powerful proof. He does not go so far as to say that Gautama never existed; on the contrary, he believes that Buddhism had a remarkable and noble founder; but the

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

beautiful legends of his incarnation, birth, youth, and apostolate are only, in his opinion, developments of an immemorially ancient sun-myth, traces of which may be found in the earlier creeds of all nations. The very exquisiteness of the legend in its most perfect form seems to him proof of the enormous period required for its artistic and philosophical evolution,—just as the wondrous metallic colors of the humming-bird's plumage proclaims it perhaps the most ancient of all existing species of birds on the American continent. Iconoclastic M. Senart's essay must appear to many who admire Gautama as a human reality;—yet to the evolutionist it affords a most valuable argument in favor of the new philosophy. If you read Senart's chapters on Buddhist emblems,—the Wheel, the Bodhitree, the Lotos, the Trident, the Horse, the Serpent,—with the illustrated edition of Arnold's poem beside you, the instructive value of the pictures will be fully understood.

- The work of Senart, however, will scarcely affect the popularity of *The Light of Asia* among that immense class of readers for whom it is becoming a sort of sacred scripture. Whether the Wheel-emblem, with all its attaching philosophy regarding the circle of the eternal laws, be traceable to earliest worship of the Sun-disk, and

BUDDHIST LITERATURE

to prehistoric myths concerning the rising and setting of our day-star;—whether the story of the Indian savior's incarnation and life and miracles be derived from Brahmanic legends themselves developed from ancient ideas of fire-worship;—whether there ever was a young prince, who, believing himself called to save mankind, yielded up a kingly throne, and all the pleasures of wealth, and the love of women, to go forth as a mendicant and teach,—really makes very little difference to those who seek the beautiful and the true in life. Buddhism has been of incalculable service to mankind by creating an ideal of goodness and of love and of a beauty so holy that even the skepticism of the nineteenth century bows low in reverence before it.

THE DATAVAYA BHARATA KARYALAYA

The first nine fascicules of Protap Chandra Roy's English translation of the *Mahabharata* having found their way to New Orleans, we have an opportunity to judge of the value and immensity of the undertaking by its results, and to add a few remarks to those already made in a former article upon the same subject. Mr. Armand Hawkins has imported several sets of the new work from Calcutta, and those interested in Oriental literature can apply to him for information regarding subscription, either to the publication itself, or to the literary fund of the Datavaya Bharata Karyalaya which asks for the support of American scholars.

The nine fascicules before us complete the *Adi Parva* or the *First Book*, and begin the second, or *Sabha Parva*; the *Adi Parva* alone forming a volume of about five hundred pages. When it is remembered that the *Mahabharata* contains eighteen such books, the magnitude of that enormous epic becomes fully manifest to the imagination. When completed, the translation will form quite a library. The pages are about

BHARATA KARYALAYA

16mo; and the typographical work is executed in imitation of the fascicules of the *Bibliotheca Indica*, although inferior to the latter in many respects; for the publications of the Asiatic Society are issued by master printers with all modern typographical appliances and inventions to aid; while the work of the Bharata press is executed by natives, who compose squatting upon the floor, and strike off the printed sheets upon a hand-press. Nevertheless they work rapidly,—for about two fascicules are issued monthly; and although the results of their labor leaves something to be desired, it has been universally spoken of by competent Indian and European critics as quite remarkable of its kind.

The translation has been everywhere commended for its faithfulness and smoothness. Of course it were unreasonable to expect highly artistic work in the production of so colossal a translation. Men like Foucaux or Pavie, giving years of refined scholarship to the translation of a few episodes of the mighty poem, might indeed polish and make gracious the language of their pages, even the point of rhythmic and poetical prose; but to translate the whole work on this plan were impossible. The Orientalist Goldstucker, who attempted it, died almost before the work was fairly begun. Hippolyte Fauche,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

who unfortunately possessed neither the positivism nor the high scruples of true scholarship, translated ten volumes indifferently, and died leaving nearly half of the allotted task undone. Nor does this seem wonderful when we remember that the labor demanded is considerably greater than what is required for a complete translation of the Talmud,—a translation that does not yet exist *in toto*. If the student of the Talmud must spend seven years in merely seeking to obtain a general idea of the *Mishna* and the *Gemara*, and seventy years in measuring Talmudic learning, the Sanscrit scholar must give an entire lifetime to the *Mahabharata* in order to analyze it critically. Before this can be done translations must be procurable; one must be able to obtain a general knowledge of the literary construction of the epic, and to refer at once to any portion which it is desirable to examine.

Protap Chandra Roy's translation is largely intended to supply such a want. It is plain, pure English;—naked and simple. In many respects it compares well with the work of Eastwick and other celebrated translators from the Oriental tongues. Good prose is always readable, while poor verse is seldom so; and the prose before us will continue to have the charm of interest even for those outside the pale of scholarship long

BHARATA KARYALAYA

after the names have been forgotten of men who travestied Sanscrit poetry in clumsy English rhyme. As for Griffith's translation of the *Ramayana* into a poetical form, an eminent critic has not hesitated to aver that it sinks into insignificance beside so immense a work as this.

The importance of the great Indian epics historically and ethically, although fully appreciated by scholars, has never been fully manifested in learned literature; because sufficient time has not yet elapsed to allow of such a comparative and philological study of them being made as has been given to the Homeric or Scandinavian literatures. Vast commentaries and monumental analyses of the sacred poems must be made in time in connection with the investigation of Oriental history, sociology and religion. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* restore for us conditions of faith, and of civilization, which the Vedic writers knew nothing of,—which indeed followed and obscured the true Vedic period. *Native Opinion*, a fine Indian periodical, observes of the *Mahabharata*:—"The book is a national property: it guides almost every phase of the Hindoo manners and beliefs of the present age. One might know everything about the Vedas, and yet fail to know anything about the modern Hindoo, who is more a Hindoo of the *Mahab-*

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

harata than of the Rig-Veda or of the Atharva-Veda." . . .

The story of Protap Chandra Roy himself is very interesting,—even, we may say, very touching,—and deserves to be better known. He is not, as has been represented, a mere native zealot, desirous to expend some superfluous revenue in a grand scheme of propagandism. He is not enormously wealthy, and began life under rather meager circumstances, as a bookseller,—a business by no means modern in India, as any one knows who has read the *Panchatantra* or other collection of ancient Sanscrit stories illustrating the city life of India in former centuries. In late years, considerably prior to the foundation of those Arya Somajes which publish cheap translations of the Vedas of Puranas into modern Bengali or other Hindoo dialects, the sale of MSS. was a common occupation. Versions in the vulgar dialect of the chief holy poems have long⁶ been sold in the bazaars; and judging from the fact that all who can read their mother tongue purchase and read the epics as a sacred duty,—that it is the custom to learn episodes by heart and chant them in the streets of cities like Calcutta, one may suppose the native booksellers to enjoy an extensive patronage. But the pa-

BHARATA KARYALAYA

trons are poor, and large fortunes are not made or expended in literary material. Babu Protap found it advisable to combine his book business with that of a general agent; and finally succeeded in making himself sufficiently independent to retire from business, and even to indulge the tastes of a scholar and the charity of a philanthropist. Among other things he attempted to bring out a new Bengali translation of the *Mahabharata*, the four Bengali versions already in existence not supplying the popular need satisfactorily. It was to be furnished to subscribers at a trifle above actual cost of production, and was begun in 1866. Before the first edition was sold, the Hindoo scholar's wife died,—and with her also died many beautiful purposes and noble hopes that had been cherished wholly for her sake. Certain men who in the loss of a beloved companion lose also all that gives glamor to the past, joy to the present, strength to the future,—either remould their lives in a new direction or fling them away. Protap Chandra Roy adopted the former course;—he resolved to distribute gratuitously the remainder of the splendid edition upon his hands, and to devote the remainder of his life to literary charities. But his own means were far from sufficient to

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

carry out the new project; and he called upon the the Prince of India and the great scholars of Europe to aid him.

Thus the Datavaya Bharat Karyalaya was founded,—with a membership including the Maharajahs of Burdwan and of Cashmere, of Travancore and Bardwan and Bahadoor, the Gaikwar of Baroda, and seven distinguished rajahs. The scholars of the Occident, who aided the aims of the new society, were soon rewarded by fine reprints of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in Sanscrit and Bengalee, and are now receiving the first English translation of the *Mahabharata*. The distribution is not wholly gratuitous, as has been implied however, nor could any reasonable man expect an unlimited gratuitous circulation of a work costing about \$50,000 to produce. But subscribers, outside the regular free list, are only charged after all, to contribute to the fund of a magnificent literary and religious institution which deserves all possible support.

The founder of the Bharata Karyalaya may not live to see the immense translation completed; but the society is strong and sincere, and will continue the work after him. It is interesting to note that Protap Chandra Roy acknowledges having received more encouragement from America than from England. A pleasing fea-

BHARATA KARYALAYA

ture of the undertaking is the appearance from time to time upon the cover of a fascicule of a curious and beautiful Hindoo prayer for the subscribers, the reviewers, and for all who give encouragement to the good work of the Bharata Karyalaya.

THE SONG CELESTIAL

Having given, in the preface to his *Song Celestial*, a list of the various European translations of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Mr. Edwin Arnold says:—"If I venture to offer a translation of the wonderful poem after so many superior scholars . . . it is because English literature would certainly be incomplete without possessing in popular form a poetical and philosophical work so dear to India." Mr. Arnold thus declares that he has undertaken to fill a void that really existed, despite the admirable English version of the *Bhagavad-Gita* in prose, by John Davies ("English and Foreign Philosophical Library"); and his idea of giving a "popular form" to the poem seems to have been simply to versify it. We believe, however, most students of Indian philosophy will agree with us in declaring the *Bhagavad-Gita* to belong to that class of works which no degree of ingenuity and no amount of art can ever make popular; and that the effort is about as rational as it would be to attempt to popularize Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, or Spinoza. Even scholars like Schlegel have

THE SONG CELESTIAL

ventured to doubt if they had been able to grasp all the deeper meaning of the Sanscrit singer. That Edwin Arnold should have been able to popularize the Buddha legend in *The Light of Asia* is not any reason that he should be able to do as much for Vedantic Philosophy. *The Light of Asia* was based wholly upon a beautiful romance, strongly akin to certain Christian notions; and the profounder ideas of the narrative could be skimmed over by readers without any loss of enjoyment. But in the *Bhagavad-Gita* there is only the thinnest strand of legend,—a mere thread of story supporting an immense and ponderous tapestry of pantheistic fancies. To popularize these is simply impossible;—persons capable of comprehending the subtler theories of Brahminism will always turn to a trustworthy literal translation; those who care nothing for Oriental metaphysics are not apt to be fascinated by a rendering of the *Bhagavad-Gita* into English verse, even were the verses forged by so powerful a word-smith as Alfred Tennyson. As for Mr. Arnold's poetical manipulation of the subject, it is not unjust to declare that the *Song Celestial* is the weakest volume he has yet produced.

To translate the *Bhagavad-Gita* worthily were a task even more difficult than to translate Homer into English metre as sonorous and as

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

perfect as the Greek, while fully preserving the original meaning; and such a task few men living are capable of. Free translation of a poem of this character is absolutely inadmissible, for obvious reasons; and Mr. Arnold has indulged in free renderings *ad libitum*. Furthermore he has varied his metre in a decidedly whimsical manner; abandoning blank verse to dabble in quatrains, and changing quatrains again for clumsy lyrics. This he excuses by declaring that he varies his measure only when the original varies; and the Sanscrit measure indeed does occasionally change. But the change is majestic;—the mighty rhymeless verse deepens with the deepening of the thought, as a surf-roll deepens under a rising wind. The attempt to render the same effect in English by adopting at one time the form of Milton's *Ode*, and at another by using rhyming hexameters and heptameters, is not worthy of a poet. From the dignified repose of blank verse the reader suddenly tumbles into a jingling current of sing-song rhyme most painfully inappropriate to the idea expressed. When Krishna, first the charioteer, reveals himself as deity, and displays to awe-stricken Arjuna the terror of the All-Destroyer, Arjuna is made to utter his admiration in this wise:

THE SONG CELESTIAL

The kings and chiefs drawn in
That gaping gorge within;
The best of all both armies torn and riven.
Between thy jaws they lie
Mangled full bloodily,
Ground into dust and death! Like streams down-driven

With helpless haste, which go
With headlong, furious flow
Straight to the gulping maw of the unfilled ocean.
So to that flaming cave
These heroes great and brave
Pour, in unending streams, with helpless motion.

In the original, on the contrary, the metre becomes more solemn; for the hero, in presence of the self-transforming Supreme, describes with dread what he beholds,—Divinity in the aspect of Destruction, devouring the nations. Again Mr. Arnold selects a sing-song measure for the opening of the Eleventh Book, which literally translated, reads:—

“I am Time, the World-Destroyer;—ancient I come •
to destroy generations.”

But Mr. Arnold renders the idea into this sort of verse:

Thou see'st me as Time who kills,—Time who brings
all to doom,

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

The Slayer Time, Ancient of Days, come hither to consume.

Such departure from poetical dignity appears in a still more provoking form in the Eighth Book, where Arjuna, having asked "what is God," receives from Krishna himself the most sublime answer ever framed in human language. Mr. Arnold utterly distorts the beauty of the lines concerning—

—that Antique Poet, regulator of the world,—more subtle than the atom,—sustainer of the Universe,—incomprehensible in His form,—shining above darkness with the splendor of the Sun. . . .

Now Arnold's translation reads—

Who so hath known me, Lord of sage and singer,
Ancient of Days, of all the Three worlds Stay,
Boundless—but unto every atom, bringer
Of that which quickens it;—Whoso I say,
Hath known my form, which passeth mortal knowing;
Seen my effulgence—which no eye hath seen,—
Than the sun's burning gold more brightly glowing
Dispersing darkness, etc. . . .

A number of similar weaknesses might be cited:—the Second Book is full of them. Where Krishna discourses on the mystery of Life as a

“THE SONG CELESTIAL”

flash between two darknesses,—as a fact whereof the beginning and the end are alike unknown—“only the middle being visible,”—as a marvel contemplated by some, discussed by some, harkened to by others, yet understood by no one, Mr. Arnold breaks into this singular rhyming:

Wonderful, wistful to contemplate!
Difficult, doubtful to speak upon!
Strange and great for tongue to relate,
Mystical hearing for every one!
Nor wotteth man this, what a marvel it is
When seeing and saying and hearing are done!

When the poet mounts his English rendering in the larger setting of blank verse, he is much more successful. Here are some extracts from the Seventh and Eighth books of *The Song Celestial*:—

I am the fresh taste of the water; I
The silver of the moon, the gold o' the sun;
The word of worship in the Veds, the thrill
That passeth in the ether. . . .
. . . I am the good sweet smell
Of the moistened earth; I am the fire's red light,
The vital air moving in all which moves.

.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

I am the Sacrifice! I am the prayer!
I am the funeral cake set for the dead!
I am the healing herb! I am the ghee,
The Mantra, and the flame, and that which burns!

I am—of all this boundless Universe—
The Father, Mother, Ancestor, and Guard!
The End of Learning! That which purifies
In lustral water! I am OM! I am
Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Ved!

This is not ignoble verse; yet who would not prefer such a literal prose translation of the same slokas as that which a great French scholar had already given:—

... "I am the sweetness of waters, O son of Kunti! I am the light of moon and sun,—the Vedic Hymns of praise,—the sound of air,—the vigor of men,—the pure perfume of earth,—the splendor of fire,—the life in all living creatures.

"I am Sacrifice, Adoration, the Offering to the dead; I am the Saving Herb; I am the Unction; I am the Fire; I am the Victim.

"I am the father of the world,—its mother,—its spouse,—its progenitor;—I am the doctrine, the purification, the Mystic Word,—the Rig, the Sama, the Yajour.

"I am the Way, the Help, the Lord, the Witness, the Habitation, the Refuge, the Friend!—I am Birth and

THE SONG CELESTIAL

Destruction,—the Repose,—the Treasurer,—the Seed of Immortality.

"I it is who gives warmth, who restrains or lets fall the rain of heaven;—I am Immortality and Death—Being and Non-Being, O Arjuna." . . .

There are some beauties in *The Song Celestial*—beauties of description, as in the fine opening scene where the armies marshal for battle, and all the trumpets sound; and Edwin Arnold is always at his best in description. But generally speaking, this book is a signal failure. Its author has been sharply criticized for the hasty execution which marred the interest of previous publications; yet the fault was never so palpable in any of his former works. As a matter of fact there is much more true poetry in the prose translations by Burnouf and Davies than in the imperfect metre of *The Song Celestial*. Those prose renderings were the result of years of labor;—the labors of Mr. Arnold would seem to have occupied a few months! As the result of hasty workmanship, the volumes may have the relative value of a curiosity; but it has neither the faithfulness of a translation, nor the merit of a poem. A "void in English literature" is not to be filled up by such work as this; and those who most admire the author of *Indian Idyls*

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

will certainly regret that he should have selected the *Bhagavad-Gita*, of all subjects—one of the greatest monuments of human genius,—for such indifferent treatment.

INDIAN FEMALE POETS

The charming article upon Toru Dutt, published in the January *Century*, will doubtless attract very considerable attention to a subject as yet unfamiliar to European or American readers—except, indeed, through the remarkable essays of the late M. Garcin de Tassy: the *rôle* of woman in the literature of India. It is true that Toru Dutt can scarcely be considered a true representative of Indian literature, despite the existence of her charming volume of Hindoo legends in English verse. She was, strictly speaking, a Europeanized Hindoo,—writing German, English, and French with as much facility as that which she displayed in the use of her own native tongue; and being familiar with Sanscrit, not as might be a learned Brahman, but only as a European Orientalist might acquire mastery of that grand dead tongue. Her artistic feeling was almost wholly European; and her studies in Indian literature must resemble those of Edwin Arnold rather than those of a poet of her own race. Tora Dutt, however, affords a very singular example of intellectual capacity on the part of an Oriental girl,—a capacity, indeed, such

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

as very few cultivated Europeans possess. Her extraordinary genius enables one to believe more readily in those stories of Hindoos able to perform seventy different tasks simultaneously,—intellectual jugglers whose mental subtlety baffles the mightiest Western brain. She represents the higher mental capacity of a race which, with larger advantages, might have no intellectual equal. When the literary work of this mere girl—one might almost say child—is compared with many of the efforts published by LL.D.'s and F.R.S.'s in Trubner's *Oriental Series*, or in the Oriental collections of Leroux, Maisonneuve, and others, more than one European Orientalist will have reason to blush.

It were very erroneous to consider this beautiful Hindoo brain a solitary and phenomenal blossom of genius produced solely by Christian and foreign influences. Such intellectual flowers are not altogether uncommon in India; but they usually bloom, and too often die, unperceived by European eyes. The female poets of Hindostan have generally sung to native audiences only; and but for the laborious researchs of a French Orientalist, it is probable that the names of the most celebrated would even to-day have no signification in foreign ears. None familiar with the literature of antique India ignore the fact

INDIAN FEMALE POETS

that female poets existed in the past; but it is not so generally known that in modern times Hindostan has boasted very extraordinary female poets, not only among the Hindoos proper but also among the Moslems. It would seem that the Mohammedan conquerors of India transplanted thither the ancient and chivalrous Arabic appreciation of female poetical talent.

Many of these Moslem ladies obtained great fame with their Indian compatriots; and among the *gazals*, *pads*, *dhurpads*, *tappas*, *thumris*, which figure among the popular poetry of the Hindoos, no small proportion were invented by the inmates of *zananas*, or of harems.

Of all modern Indian poetesses, the greatest was Mira-Bai (Lady Mira), a daughter of kings, and the spouse of a rajah. She founded not only a poetical school, but likewise a religious sect which still subsists. This sect believes in justification by faith alone, without works;—its tutelary deity is the amorous Krishna, in whom some eccentric writers have pretended to discover the prototype of the Judean Christ. Mira was a kind of religious Sappho: her poetry in honor of Krishna is said to be scarcely less beautiful than the language of "Radha" in the untranslatable *Gita-Govinda*, though happily less erotic. Mira is now held to be a saint; her history, is

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

written in the holy *Bhaktamal*; and singular traditions of her life form part of actual Hindoo folklore. Her songs are still sung in a hundred cities.

Scarcely less celebrated was Jana-Bai,—who began life as the slave of the Hindoo saint Nam-Deo. Like the great ascetics of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, this Nam-Deo taught his pupils the art of religious poetry; and stories are told of him not much less marvelous than the miracles related of the authors of the great Sanscrit epics. When a child he was once told to place the usual offering of sugar and milk before the image of Vishnu; and having so done, he was grieved and astonished to observe that the image did not drink! Imagining this was on account of his own unworthiness he attempted to cut his throat, when Vishnu seized the milk and drank it. It was from this Nam-Deo that the girl Jana obtained her poetical training. Her poetry is very beautiful, but it is of a purely religious description.

A third great modern female poet was Karma-Bai,—a daughter of the Sikhs. Her canticles and songs actually form part of their great canonical work, the *Sambhū-Granth*. Less popular, perhaps, as a poet, but more sadly famous by reason of her tragical end, was Ratnawati,

INDIAN FEMALE POETS

wife of a Hindoo chief slain by Scher-Schah. The Moslem prince sought to kill Ratnawati's husband, solely for the purpose of himself obtaining that beautiful and talented woman; but the Kshatrya slew his bride with his own hands rather than leave her to such a fate. The famous Scher-Schah revenged himself in a manner too hideous to recount . . . it was in 1528.

In more modern times there have been many female poets in India; but since the sixteenth century most of these seem to have been Moham-medans. Some were queens, ladies of high rank, such as Dulhan-Begam (wife of the Nabob of Oude, Asaf Uddaula), an elegiac singer of wonderful sweetness;—Ganna-Begam (wife of a vizier of Ahmad Shah), whose poems are still written upon the hearts of the people of Delhi;—Chanda, or *Mah-Lika* (the Moon-Faced), Queen of Hyderabad, whose poems have been compared to those of Sappho by M. Garcin de Tassy. Besides these, however, modern India boasts a very brilliant galaxy of lesser singers,—professional bayaderes, such as Moti of Delhi and Jan of Farrukhabad. The last named dancing-girl printed a collection of her poems in 1847, which had a great success in India, especially at Lucknow, and was much admired by the

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

most eminent scholars. She was then only twenty-six. Her verses are exquisitely dainty, and characterized by a highly refined wit. Zinat of Delhi, another bayadere, is said to have been still more remarkable; and certainly the specimen of her poetry quoted by the Orientalists from whom these facts are drawn, is touchingly beautiful.

The above names represent only the most famous of a multitude of more or less celebrated modern female Indian poets; only those who have exercised a very great influence upon the literature and the religious thought of their people, or those who have made the popular Songs of India.

THE EPIC OF KINGS

Under the above title Messrs. Henry Holt & Co., of New York, have recently brought out an American edition of a delightful volume which received on its first appearance in London, high praise in the *Westminster Review*, and which the prince of archæological artists, Alma Tadema, deigned to illustrate with two etchings. Of these etchings, it must be confessed, the hard realism is disappointing. The figures are commonplace—not much superior to those which appear in popular editions of the *Arabian Nights*,—and certainly do not harmonize at all with the superb pen-pictures of the poet Firdusi.

This *Epic of Kings* is not a translation, but a beautiful paraphrase by Helen Zimmern of that mighty Persian poem known to Oriental scholars as the *Shah-Nameh* or, *Book of Kings*, but little known to the general public. Miss Helen Zimmern has adopted a plan very similar to that chosen by this journal in its occasional reproduction of stories from the unfamiliar literature of the East.* No attempt at

* These stories were reproduced by Hearn himself, and most of them have since appeared in book-form, as in *Chinese Ghosts*, for example.—*The Editor*.

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

a literal translation has been attempted by her; but she has admirably succeeded in preserving the spirit and strength of Firdusi in her prose version of his most famous stories. Sometimes she has abridged, occasionally changed; yet the work leaves nothing for the reader to regret, and she has fitly chosen the solemn and potent English of Shakespeare's age, and of the Bible, for Firdusi's new robe of honor.

There is but one complete version of Firdusi in any European tongue—Jules Mohl's French version, which would cost an American purchaser in the neighborhood of \$150. It is a masterpiece, however, and well worth the price. In Oriental translations the French and the Germans surpass the English; for it is to be regretted that until very recently English translators have persistently translated Persian and Sanscrit authors into clumsy English verse. Hafiz has been frightfully Anglicized, and Sadi likewise; while the French scholars faithfully translating them into brilliant prose, have at least preserved the color and perfume of their thoughts. To translate Oriental poetry into European poetry without distorting its physiognomy or neutralizing its color, is practically impossible, even by so magical a writer as Edwin Arnold; just as no student familiar with Greek would grant the possibility

THE EPIC OF KINGS

of comprehending the spirit of Homer or of Pindar through existing metrical translations. Miss Zimmern, who confesses her ignorance of Persian, has based her studies upon Mohl's prose version, and sensibly eschewed all the metrical absurdities of the English paraphrasers. So perfectly has she wrought her work that she has left nothing for others to do in the same line.

The *Shah-Nameh* contains, in a certain sense, the traditional history of Iran for a period of 3500 years,—the chronicles of the early Kings, whose figures magnified more and more by the mists of time in proportion as they appear more remote, appear superhuman and monstrous. Venerable as these chronicles and traditions are, they were not wrought into the rich jewelry of epic verse until after the commencement of the eleventh century, by the poet whose genius won for him the surname Firdusi, "the Paradisaical."

As in the great epics of India, Greece, and Scandinavia, the gods in the *Shah-Nameh* take part in human affairs—alternately aiding or chastising kings who live to fabulous ages, and perform incredible deeds. But the spirit or the recital has a value far above the mere interest of legend;—it manifests the existence in ancient Persia of what was long erroneously supposed to

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

be indigenous to Europe and to Christian soil—true chivalry. Indeed, the resemblance between the heroes of the Arthurian idyls and the Pehlivans of the *Shah-Nameh* is so startlingly minute as to make any one doubt whether the themes so beautifully treated of recent years by Tennyson, did not have an Iranian origin,—whether Lancelot is not a resurrected Rustem.

What Matthew Arnold, in his splendid trilogy, has done to popularize Indian and Indo-Moslem sentiment, ethical and religious, Miss Zimmern has done in a more humble, but scarcely less attractive way, toward familiarizing the public with the epic stories of ancient Persia. Her book represents, we hope, one step toward a new and vast movement. European literature has reached the apogee of that development given to it by its intrinsic vitality; it needs an invigorating impulse from without,—fresh blood from other sources. The ideas of the Orient are only now being fully understood and fairly appreciated;—they are certainly destined to influence Occidental thought more than superficially. The flowers of Western idealism will be marvelously improved by crossing with Eastern literary growths. More has been accomplished by the linguist toward realizing the beautiful fancy of a universal brotherhood of nations, than has even been

THE EPIC OF KINGS

done by the dissemination of positive science and the interlinking of commercial interests the world over. The study of words,—words which endure longer than temples hewn out of solid rock—teach us to know the likeness of the human heart in all countries and in all ages,—to recognize the superiority in many respects of nations long deemed barbaric,—and to understand dimly the existence of that wondrous law of intellectual development which adapts faith to purposes and hopes to necessities, and tempers the sense of beauty according to human powers of acquisition.

CHINESE BELIEF IN GOD

An eminent Chinese scholar,—the Marquis d'Hervey Saint-Denys, translator of the *Chi-King* (or, as English readers are more accustomed to see the title spelled, the "She-King"), of the poets of the Thang Dynasty, of the *Kin-Kou-Ki-Koan*, and other Chinese classics, recently delivered a lecture of uncommon interest before the French Institute on the subject of Chinese religion. In a country like the United States, where almost every large city has its Chinese element, and where more is supposed to be known in a general way about the Chinese than is known in European capitals, the lecture of M. de Saint-Denys deserves very considerable attention, because it completely contradicts many current opinions in regard to Chinese faith. A full account of the religions of China, their evolution, their inter-relation and inter-blending, would require a labor so colossal that no man, in the present state of linguistic science could hope to attempt it successfully; and M. d'Hervey de Saint-Denys has frankly announced his incapacity for so vast a task. But the underlying spirit of all Chinese religion, ancient and modern, may be

CHINESE BELIEF IN GOD

pursued by a consummate scholar through the long course of that literature, which for enormity and uselessness, has been forcibly compared by Williams to the Great Wall of the Empire. This is the duty the Marquis has undertaken; and the result of his researches throws a new and very pleasing light upon the subject of Chinese belief.

Like some of those Oriental fabrics, whereof the texture is wholly concealed by grotesque embroideries in gold thread and multi-colored silks, primitive Chinese faith in the Supreme has become so covered up by the imagery of fantastical superstitions and idolatrous rite as to have been hidden even from the discernment of Christian missionaries learned in the language of the country. What the Three Religions are was not made any plainer to Occidental comprehension by Confucius' tolerant observation that they were really all one and the same; the symbolism of the strange Trinity was too conflicting to be harmonized by any superficial examiner. How Buddhism, with its philosophy of illusion, could be made to harmonize with the practical ethics of Confucius—how Taoism, with its demonology and witchcraft, could unite with the pure worship of Chang-ti, the Sovereign Lord, was long a riddle to Western minds. And the riddle has

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

not been easily solved. Books and monographs innumerable have been written by sinologists for the purpose of establishing some positive position for Chinese faith in general; but these writings, interconfused and antagonistic, left only a chaos of mystery in the mind of the reader, who felt himself totally unable to decide whether the Chinese ought to be considered atheists, polytheists or materialists. As in Chinese music the philosophy of the art is totally at variance with the practice thereof; so, in Chinese religion, the worship of ancestors and the rites of sacrifice, and the observance of multifarious superstitious customs, seemed totally at variance with the general materialism of Chinese life. And as that music, although rich in melody, is wholly void of harmony, so it seemed the Chinese ethical system, while replete with philosophical excellence, totally lacked the basis of all great religions—belief in a universal God. Finally, through the writings of zealous but ill-informed missionaries, and the writings of specialists also, whose studies had been directed through too narrow a channel, we were taught to regard the Chinese as a curiously contradictory race, full of gross superstitions, and yet otherwise atheistical. By confuting this widespread error, the Marquis d'Hervey Saint-Denys has done no less a service

CHINESE BELIEF IN GOD

to the science of comparative religions than to the Chinese nation itself.

The most striking fact about the Marquis' essay, is that it upsets the popular idea of Confucius as the founder of a new religion. Confucius was simply the reformer, or rather the conservator, of a pre-existing faith and an ethical system dating back to at least the twentieth century before our era. Confucius, coming upon the world's stage in the fifth century before Christ, found Chinese literature and philosophy in a period of decay. It was a decay of material so vast that only a very wonderful scholar could hope to sift out and preserve the few sound remains of great learning and healthy thought from the boundless heap of rotting philosophy and decomposing art. Confucius thus discovered and preserved for us those noblest monuments of Chinese antiquity,—the two *King*, the *Chi* and the *Chou*. Between the doctrines of those most ancient books and his own, there are no differences of ethical or religious belief. If Confucius wrote little of his own ideas of God and of a future life, it was because he wrote only as a conservator,—as an editor. He did not think it necessary to prove beliefs already deeply-rooted in the Chinese mind, nor could he dare to vary from creeds whose hoary

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

age seemed to him a proof of their eternal truth.

Now these very canons,—the *King*,—preserved and rejuvenated by the learned labor of Confucius, bear testimony the most positive of Chinese belief in a Supreme Being, an omnipotent Creator, an All-Father—to borrow the grand Scandinavian term. For example, in the *Chi-King*, which takes us back three thousand years, we find the following lines upon the founder of the Tcheou dynasty:—

—“Wen-Wang now dwelleth in the upper spaces:
Oh! how great is his glory in heaven!
Whether he riseth (to the highest of the celestial spheres)
or whether he descendeth (to the regions of earth),—
He remaineth ever at the right and at the left of the
Sovereign Lord.”—[*Chi-King*, Part III, Ode 1st.]

It will be observed that this simple declaration of faith in God, is coupled with an equally strong assertion of belief in the immortality of the soul. Again we read:—

“Heaven (*tien*), who placed upon the throne the virtuous ancestor of the dynasty of Yn,
Hath not permitted his (degenerate) descendants to keep
the Empire. . . .
Wen-Wang, who served the Sovereign Lord (*Chang-ti*)
with a pure heart, was filled with blessings, and re-

CHINESE BELIEF IN GOD

ceived the mandate to govern the nations."—[Ode II, Part III.

And here is a third touching extract from the same ancient scripture:—

—“Oh! how great is He!—how vast is He!—the Sovereign Lord (*Chang-ti*) the Master of the World! How terrible is He!—how awful His judgments are! Heaven (*tien*) created man, but not in order that man should rashly use the privilege of life.”—[Ode XXI.

These paragraphs leave no doubt whatever in the mind regarding the signification of the Chinese words *tien* and *Chang-ti*;—the former is used as we use the word “Heaven” in religious writing; the latter as a name of the Supreme. Yet another example:—

—“I cannot forbear to do that which Heaven (*tien*) commands;
I cannot disobey the Sovereign Lord (*Chang-ti*).—
[*Chou-King*: Chapt. *Ta-Kao*, or “*Great Warnings*.”

Nor could any other meaning be taken from the following lines, in which the words “Heaven” and “Lord” are used as explicitly as in the Christian Bible:—

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

—“Of old, when Tching-tang took possession of the throne, his minister, Y-yn, was inspired in his counsels by august Heaven. . . . Also, in the reign of the King Tai-ou, the ministers Y-chi and Tchin-hou received inspiration from the Sovereign Lord.”—
[*Chou-King*: Chapt. *Kiun-chi*.

—“The Sovereign Lord (*Chang-ti*) first gave warning to the King of Hia by many Calamities.”—[*Chou-King*: Chapt. *To-fang*.

And, as he did not mend his ways, we hear that “Heaven (*tien*) chose one more worthy than he to whom to confide the government of the nations.”

Again we read:—

—“Sovereign Heaven cannot err,—cannot be deceived.”
—[*Chi-King*, III; Ode 2.

—“Heaven loves us with the love of a father and of a mother;—Heaven is the Master of the World.”—
[*Chou-King*: “*Hong-fang*.”

—“Heaven has given power unto Kings to preserve nations and to teach them: they are the ministers of the Sovereign Lord.”—[*Chou-King*: “*Tai-chi*.”

—“The Sovereign Lord caused Tching-tang to be born. By his unceasing piety, Tching-tang surpassed even all those who had gone before him;

CHINESE BELIEF IN GOD

Daily the brightness of his merit went up, as a homage,
to Heaven,

The Sovereign Lord was touched by the fervent worship thus paid unto Him.

He gave unto Tching-tang the government of all the states of the Empire."

Eleven hundred years before Christ, the idea of God had not altered, as the following hymn-verses of the Tcheou period show:

"The Most High and Sovereign Lord looks down upon the earth:

Majestically He contemplates the passing of events;
Attentively He watches all the regions of the Empire;
He wishes that the nations be righteously governed."

And the Chinese commentators of the Imperial College, re-editing the *Chou-King*, thus at a later day expressed their conception of the Almighty in language well-worthy of the Hebrew Psalmist:—

—"How great, how sublime, how profound He is,—the August Heaven! His justice is infallible;—His penetration is absolute;—His intelligence hath no limits. He hath no ears;—yet all things are heard by Him; He hath no eyes, yet all things are seen by Him. Whether in the rulings of a prince, or in the life of any private person, there is no good or evil action that escapes Him. For Him there are no obscurities, nor any secret cham-

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

bers. He knows all; He observes all things; nothing may ever be hidden from Him."

The French scholar successfully traces out the same belief, in the same faith, all through the long evolution of Chinese literature and dogma, and even into our own day,—faith in One God,—faith in the immortality of the soul; and he points out with great force that in no known Chinese book can a profession of materialistic beliefs be discovered, and that there are no Chinese characters to express the idea of *atheist* or of *atheism*. Furthermore he assures us that the Buddhist idea of *Nirvana*—of the total end of the soul,—never has taken root in China! This is a very interesting statement, especially when we recollect that de Rosny, in his recent work upon Japanese literature (*Bibliothèque Orientale Elzevirienne*) shows that in Japan Buddhism changed character, and became a religion in which the doctrine of a future life obtained much poetical and touching expression. The reason for this state of things in China appears especially to be that the worship of ancestors, the family duty of reverence to the dead (which forms so profound a principle in Chinese religion that the Jesuit missionaries found it inexpedient to oppose it)—could never exist side

CHINESE BELIEF IN GOD

by side with the doctrine of total annihilation.

The monotheistic dogmas of the Religion of the Learned, as Confucianism is called, could not be easily understood, perhaps, by the more ignorant millions of China,—to whose grosser imaginations the outward practices and pomps of Buddhism and of Taoism offered a readier religious inspiration. But the purity of the antique cult prevails among the educated classes still,—side by side with the harmless and beautiful religion of ancestral worship, whose shrines are in every household; and still the Emperor publicly bows in homage before that Supreme Lord, to whom no altar is erected, because His altar is the Universe, with its myriad million suns for taper-lights,—to whom no temple is ever built, because His temple-roof is the blue of the infinite and eternal heaven.

A PEEP AT JAPANESE POETRY

If it seems astonishing to find in the Sanscrit literature of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, dramas rivaling those of Shakespeare, and poems worthy to compare with the most perfect production of ancient and modern European civilization, is it not still more surprising to find Chinese novelettes equal in simple beauty to the stories of Goldsmith or Addison, and Japanese verses anticipating the beauties of Alfred de Musset's creation? The revelation of our ethnic kindred to the ancient races of India seemed, after a fashion, to explain the kinship of thought and the parallelism of art-purposes; but between the Aryan and Mongolian or Japanese races there had always appeared to exist an abyss vast as the blue interspaces between planet and planet. Those osteological and physiological differences which justify the fancy of De Quincey that "a Chinese seems an antediluvian man renewed," are even less startlingly accentuated than certain dissimilarity of fancy and sentiment. It is no longer possible to believe that the mind of China is like the mind of Europe in embryonic condition. In these days of universal expositions, we

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

find the Chinese competing against the most cunning artists of the world, proving themselves still supreme masters in ceramics; and bewildering the eyes of Paris by the strange beauties of an art but half comprehensible to Aryan minds. The more the Western World learns of the extreme East, the more are the antiquated notions of Oriental inferiority weakened. Recent travels have dissipated the idea that physical beauty does not exist in the Yellow Empire; and European voyagers have brought back with them drawings of refined Chinese faces singularly and almost weirdly beautiful,—though with a beauty that seems not of this world. These Orientals seem indeed to differ from us as widely as might the nations of another planet; but the difference is not one of comparative superiority or inferiority;—it is a dissimilarity of physical and mental construction so extreme that we can even now understand the thoughts of those races as little as they comprehend ours. Like some strange music, perfectly constructed upon totally novel and unfamiliar principles, the intellectual life of that furthest East is something of which we feel the exotic charm vaguely, without being able to explain why.

But human affection appears to be the same in all lands,—however dissimilar races and nations

JAPANESE POETRY

may be; and the study of Chinese and of Japanese literature teaches the universalism of the best sentiments in our nature. Fifteen hundred years ago a Chinese heart uttered this little cry.

—“There is some one of whom I am thinking, —some one far away I am thinking of. A hundred leagues of mountains separate us;—*yet the same moon shines upon us both, and the same wind visits each of us.*” . . . We have already published English versions in these columns of some very ancient Chinese poems characterized throughout by touching simplicity.

In many respects, however, the popular literature of Japan harmonizes more intimately with Occidental feeling. The Japanese more resemble us in many things than do the people of the Middle Kingdom;—they appear by nature more closely related to us in thought and feeling; and many of the daintiest and brightest fancies of the great English poets have been anticipated by Japanese writers.

• *Si-Ka-Zen-Yo* is the title of a little Japanese book, with leaves tender as the skin lining an egg-shell; every page being painted with images of flowers, and sprays of foliage, and butterflies, and birds. Wonderful are the hues, also—dawn-yellows, blush-pinks, ethereal blues;—

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

there are landscapes with canary-colored fields and water-green skies, and purple or lilac hills nipped with snow; but all faint and diaphanous like a mirage. There are wonderful rains of gold lavishly splashed upon the paper, glittering among the butterflies or gleaming upon blossoms. But over and athwart this phantom scenery—the flowers and the moths and the golden rain—scurry long lines of strange black characters—twisted and twirled like black leaves blown by a great wind. Each is a living word,—the utterance of a thought; and the harmony of them all is not less gracious than the shapes, not less delicate than the tints against which their fantastic blackness finds relief. These are poems—mostly written by Japanese women of all stations, from the denizens of tea-houses even to princesses and favorites of emperors. It is not new to Oriental scholars,—having been reprinted in Paris with an admirable French translation, some ten years ago.

One of the first compositions it contains was written by a Japanese empress upon the death of her spouse,—the Mikado Ten-bu-yo—more than 1200 years ago:—

“O my great lord, master of the world, each evening thou wouldst turn thine eyes toward the reddening foliage of the trees upon the Hill of Spirits. Even to-day, here

JAPANESE POETRY

thou still living, thine eyes would be seeking them again ;
to-morrow thou wouldst contemplate them once more.

"So when evening comes, I also turn mine eyes toward the hill, and I am filled with grief. When I find myself alone at daybreak, the rough sleeve of my robe, moistened with tears, has not had time to become dry."

The rough robe is the mourning apparel, concerning which another woman-poet says—"Since customs hath limited the time of mourning, my mourning garments must be laid aside, but my tears alas! never can be laid aside." What could be more touching than the expression of the memories evoked by the sight of those trees which the dead Mikado loved to look at! The poetry of affection among the Japanese is not surpassed in purity and simple beauty by that of any other people. Thus a woman sings of her lover :

. . . "Wert thou a jewel, I would wear thee in my
bracelet;—

Wert thou a garment, never would I find time to undress me." . . .

Here are two charming *naïf* verses:—

"What though I seek to hide my passion;—every feature betrays my love.

So that each one asks me of what I am thinking."

•

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

"To what can I compare the condition of my thoughts
since I have known thee? . . .
Before then I had no thoughts."

These are the artless expressions of woman's love in its budding. In the following we have the blossom itself:—

. . . "Would it now be possible for me to pass one moment of my life without seeing thee—though that moment were short as the intervals between the joints of reeds growing by the shores of Naniva?"

Here is a very pretty sentiment:—

"I know not if his love will endure; but my thoughts, this morning, *are not less tossed than my black hair.*"

This verse has been compared with passages in Amarou and the Persian poet Kaani, who says:—
"A word, all in disorder, like the chair of my beloved,—a word without beginning or end,—is what I love most." One is tempted to quote Amarou in a more daring passage. But the extreme simplicity of the Japanese girl's verse seems more touching than the sultry beauty of the Persian poem, or even the voluptuous realism of the Indian Ovid. And these Japanese sweet-hearts become the best of wives and mothers—

JAPANESE POETRY

brave women, who in emergency wield a sabre skillfully as any soldier, and fight for their husbands. Titsingh's *Memoirs* are filled with anecdotes of such valiant women; and poetry has immortalized the deeds of many. Nagaharu, wife of the commander of a stronghold, composed the following verses while the enemy was storming the fort, and then died at her husband's side:—

. . . "How sweet to pass away together, to die together, in this world of ours where the clock which strikes the Supreme hour, is almost always too fast for one, or too slow for the other."

The Chinese lines spoken of before are equaled in beauty by the Japanese fancy:—

"Separated from thee,—far from thee,—I gaze alone at the celestial vault. . . . Ah! what delight were mine could the moon be transformed into a mirror!"

She desires that the moon "which lights them both" might become a mirror, so as to reflect her absent lover's face for her. . . . Such a sweet-heart as this must also have been Idzoumi-Siki-bu, a lady-of-honor at Mikado's court, who even at the point of death composed a little poem, praying her lover to come that she might see him once

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

more, "so as to bear the memory of his face into the other world beyond the grave."

Most of these compositions are love poems; but there are many also treating of patriotic topics, filial affection, soldierly duty, etc. Love of home appears frequently in various charming lines. A pretty instance is afforded in the verses written by a prince at the time of his retirement from public life, and his departure from the palace which he loved:—

"Though my palace be no longer the habitation of its master, forget not, O plumleaves, to bud forth each spring upon the edge of his roof."

Chinese and Japanese alike have not failed to be impressed with the picturesqueness of their own written characters. A Chinese poet compares the ideographic signs painted with a brush, to withered leaves falling upon snow. The Japanese poet says:—

"The wild ducks flying through cloud mist seem to me like letters traced in flowing ink."

It was the same person who, upon seeing a photograph for the first time, wrote:—

"A photograph is a painting by the Creator—*Whose brush is Light!*"

JAPANESE POETRY

This is modern, of course, but it partly anticipated the lines of Joaquin Miller:—

. . . I saw the lightning's gleaming rod
Reach forth and write upon the sky
The awful autograph of God.

We have cited enough to convey to the reader's mind the effect desired. Each of our quotations is the complete translation of a Japanese poem, or versical epigram; and the original collection of these has not inaptly been compared by Orientalists to the Greek *Anthology*. It must be remembered that the charms of sonorous verse and pure Oriental color have evaporated; but the reader cannot have failed to notice that the Japanese poet possesses the rare and beautiful power of arousing the deepest feeling by the utterance of a few simple words. This is the supreme perfection of epigrammatic verse. The girl's desire that the moon might become a mirror for her love's sake is not less beautiful than those celebrated lines in the Greek *Anthology* by Plato, which one English poet has translated:—

Gazing on stars, my Star? I would that I were the
welkin
Starry with infinite eyes, gazing forever on thee!

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

And the desire of the Japanese bride for a last look at her husband's face, that she might carry a perfect memory of him into the world of shadows, is surely beautiful as the old Greek epitaph in which the beloved dead is besought not to quaff the waters of Lethe, lest she forget her love. These little Japanese verses are like new thoughts spoken aloud at long intervals, breaking a happy and dreamful silence between friends—utterances unfinished yet perfect—words which unlock secret chambers of feeling,—tendernesses half evolved, only that they may be in turn dreamfully fondled to fullest development by the fancy which they caressingly create.

THE END

